

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Lord Voldemort, an evil and powerful dark wizard, has just been defeated. When he tried to kill a 1-year-old boy, Harry Potter, the killing curse rebounded upon him, destroying his body. Harry is left an orphan with a lightning-bolt scar on his forehead, Voldemort having killed his parents Lily and James Potter. Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall leave him on the doorstep of his ultra-conventional, insensitive, negligent Muggle (non-magical) relatives, the Dursley family, who take him in. They decide to conceal his magical heritage from him and make him live in a cupboard under the stairs for eleven years.

Shortly before Harry's eleventh birthday, he receives a letter addressed specifically to him. His uncle, however, reads and tears up the letter before Harry has a chance to look at its contents. The letter writer does not give up, and the Dursleys receive successively larger numbers of the same letters. Soon, his uncle becomes so paranoid that the Dursleys, with Harry in tow, hide in a shack in the middle of the ocean to get away from the letters. That night (which happens to be Harry's birthday), he is visited by an enormous man named Hagrid who bursts through the locked door of the shack. With Hagrid holding the Dursleys at bay, Harry finally reads his letter, in which he learns he has been invited to study magic at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He enters the wizarding world for the first time, learns to his surprise that he is famous, and meets the new Hogwarts Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, Professor Quirrell. He takes the train to Hogwarts from Platform Nine and three-quarters, befriends Ron Weasley, and meets Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born witch.

Upon arrival, the Sorting Hat places Harry, Ron, and Hermione in Gryffindor House. Draco Malfoy, an arrogant and elitist student, gets placed in Slytherin. Harry discovers he has a talent for riding broomsticks, and after an incident with Malfoy, is recruited to join Gryffindor's Quidditch team as a Seeker. He is the youngest Quidditch player at the school in a century, much to Malfoy's displeasure.

Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville Longbottom explore Hogwarts late at night and accidentally stumble across the door to a corridor. A three-headed dog, christened Fluffy by Hagrid, guards a trapdoor. On Halloween, Quirrell informs everyone that a troll has entered the castle; it gets locked in the girls' bathroom by Ron and Harry, where Hermione is crying after Ron has insulted her. When they realize their mistake, Harry and Ron fight the troll to save Hermione, and the three become best friends.

At Harry's first Quidditch match, Harry's broom becomes possessed, nearly knocking him off. Hermione sees Professor Severus Snape, the sinister Potions master, staring at Harry and mouthing words, making her believe that Snape has caused the broom to misbehave with a dark curse. Hoping to save Harry, Hermione sets Snape's robes on fire, distracting him and others and allowing Harry to survive.

At Christmas, Harry receives an Invisibility Cloak, once belonging to his father, which renders its wearer invisible. Harry uses it to explore the Restricted Section in the library to research information on Nicolas Flamel, a name Hagrid lets slip when confronted about his knowledge of Fluffy. Eventually, Harry learns that "Nicolas Flamel is the only known maker of the Philosopher's Stone, which produces the Elixir of Life which will make the drinker immortal".[1]

Harry sees Snape trying to get information from Quirrell about getting past Fluffy; Quirrell says he does not know what's he's talking about. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are sure that Snape is trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone in order to restore Lord Voldemort to power, but Hagrid denies it.

Harry, Hermione, Neville, and Draco are caught out late at night, and forced to serve detention with Hagrid in the Forbidden Forest. Harry sees a hooded figure drink the blood of an injured unicorn, which makes Harry's forehead scar start burning. Firenze, a centaur, tells Harry that it is a monstrous thing to slay a unicorn, let alone drink its blood. He also tells Harry that unicorn blood is like Elixir of Life, and that the hooded figure is in fact Voldemort.

Harry, Hermione and Ron find out that Hagrid, while he was drunk in a pub, has told a hooded stranger how to get past Fluffy, and they believe the theft of the Stone is imminent. That night, they go through the trapdoor to get to it first, believing that Snape is the thief. They navigate the security system set up by the school's staff which is a series of complex magical challenges. The three make it through together until finally, Harry must enter the inner chamber alone. There he finds that meek Professor Quirrell, not Snape, is attempting to steal the Stone, and realizes that Snape was trying to protect him, Harry, from harm all along. Harry confronts Quirrell and survives a second encounter with Lord Voldemort, who has possessed Quirrell and appears as a ghastly face on the back of Quirrell's head. Quirrell gets blisters when he touches Harry's skin, and Harry suffers because of his close proximity to Lord Voldemort. Dumbledore arrives just in time to rescue Harry. Voldemort then pitilessly abandons Quirrell, who dies in the aftermath of his possession.

Dumbledore reveals to Harry that Harry's mother died to protect Harry as an infant. Her pure, loving sacrifice provided Harry an ancient magical protection from Voldemort's lethal spells and also prevents Voldemort from touching Harry without suffering terribly. Dumbledore also says that the Philosopher's Stone has been destroyed to prevent future attempts by Voldemort to steal it.

Finally, at the end-of-year feast, the House Points totals are given: Gryffindor is in last place. However, Dumbledore gives a few "last-minute additions", granting points to Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville, so that Gryffindor wins the House Cup, and are crowned champions.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

While home with the Dursleys for the summer, Harry Potter is not getting any mail from his friends, Ron and Hermione. On his twelfth birthday (July 31) Harry is visited by Dobby, a house-elf, who warns him he, Harry, will be in mortal danger if he returns to Hogwarts. Harry is determined to return despite Dobby's dire warning. It turns out that Dobby was stopping Harry's letters, hoping that if Harry thought his friends had forgotten him, he might not want to return to Hogwarts. Dobby, seeing that he will have to use force, decides to drop a cake on a guest of the Dursleys through the use of a charm. Harry is blamed by the Ministry of Magic for Dobby's charm, and is told that if he does magic outside of school again, he will be expelled. The Dursleys, upon learning that he cannot do magic outside of school, have locked away Harry's books and wand; Mr Dursley has screwed bars onto his window, making Harry a prisoner.

A few days later, Fred, George, and Ron Weasley come to his rescue in their dad's flying car, a Charmed Ford Anglia. After a pleasant summer together in the Weasley house, everyone heads to Platform 9¾ to take the Hogwarts Express back to school. To their shock, Harry and Ron are unable to enter through the magical barrier between platforms 9 and 10. In desperation, they fly to Hogwarts in the car, crashing into the Whomping Willow and damaging Ron's wand. The semi-sentient car ejects them and their belongings and disappears into the Forbidden Forest.

Harry soon finds he is the unwanted centre of attention of three people: the vain new Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor Gilderoy Lockhart, a wizard perpetuating his own legend; admirer Colin Creevey, a young first year Gryffindor who endlessly takes Harry's photo; and Ron's sister, Ginny Weasley, who fancies Harry. Events take a bad turn when the Chamber of Secrets is opened and a monster stalks the castle, which literally petrifies several students. According to legend, the Chamber was built by Salazar Slytherin and can only be opened by his heir to purge Hogwarts of students who are not pure-blood wizards. Many suspect Harry is the Slytherin heir, especially after he inadvertently speaks Parseltongue (the language of snakes), a rare ability Harry gained after Voldemort's murderous attack upon Harry when Harry was an infant. Harry, Ron, and Hermione attempt to discover the Heir of Slytherin's true identity. Using Polyjuice Potion brewed by Hermione, they disguise themselves as Slytherin students, Crabbe and Goyle, hoping to learn from Draco Malfoy the identity of the heir. Malfoy, they learn, does not know who the Heir of Slytherin is, but he inadvertently provides Harry and Ron with an important clue about the Chamber of Secrets.

Unfortunately, Hermione mistakenly adds cat hair instead of human hair to her practice potion and assumes a feline appearance, and it takes a little more than a month to restore her normal human appearance.

The attacks increase throughout the year, petrifying students, including Hermione. Most horribly, a message written on a wall declares that a student—Ginny Weasley—has been taken into the Chamber where, "her skeleton will lie forever."

With Ron and Moaning Myrtle's help, Harry discovers the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. They force Gilderoy Lockhart, a fraud who wipes clean other wizards' memories and claims their achievements, to go with them. Once they find the entrance to the Chamber, Lockhart attempts to use Ron's broken wand to erase Harry and Ron's memories, but the spell backfires onto himself and brings the ceiling caving in, separating Harry from Ron and Lockhart. Lockhart revives again, but has now lost his own memory.

Harry makes it to the Chamber where he finds an unconscious Ginny. He also meets a young man named Tom Riddle, who claims to be a "memory". Harry learns that Ginny, under the control of Lord Voldemort, opened the Chamber. Voldemort, whose real name is Tom Marvolo Riddle (an anagram of "I am Lord Voldemort"), imprinted his memory in an enchanted diary, in order to one day continue the work he began when he reopened the Chamber fifty years ago—ridding Hogwarts of non-pureblood witches and wizards. It was Hagrid, a Hogwarts student at the time, who was blamed for the attacks and expelled.

Tom Riddle's memory grows more powerful as it steals life from Ginny's body, and it tries to kill Harry by setting loose the Basilisk (the monster responsible for petrifying the students). But Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes arrives carrying the Sorting Hat, from which Harry draws out the sword of Godric Gryffindor. Fawkes blinds the Basilisk, destroying its fatal gaze, and Harry slays it with the sword. He stabs the diary with one of the Basilisk's fangs, and Riddle's memory is vanquished while Ginny revives from a near-death state. She fully recovers along with Mrs. Norris, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Nearly Headless Nick, Colin Creevey, Penelope Clearwater, the other students petrified.

Harry realizes it was Lucius Malfoy who slipped the diary into Ginny's cauldron when he encountered the Weasleys in a Diagon Alley bookshop, but he is unable to prove it. Dobby reveals he is the Malfoys' servant, and knowing their treachery, had been trying to protect Harry all year. In gratitude, Harry wraps the diary in one of his old socks and hands it to Lucius. Lucius throws away the sock, but Dobby catches it. This constitutes, in Dobby's eyes, a gift of clothing—the traditional manner in which a master frees a house-elf from servitude. The freed Dobby declares he is eternally grateful to Harry and protects him from an attempted reprisal from Lucius.

Dumbledore dispels Harry's fears that he could have been put into Slytherin rather than into Gryffindor when he tells Harry that it is his choices that define him and not his abilities, and that Harry could not have wielded the sword of Gryffindor if he did not truly belong to that house.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

J.K. Rowling's third book opens with Harry Potter spending yet another miserable summer at the Dursleys. When Uncle Vernon's sister, Marge, viciously insults him, Harry's anger causes her to inflate and float to the ceiling. Still seething, and despite his uncle's threats, Harry runs away, and amid the street's dark shadows, he sees a large black dog ominously watching him. The Knight Bus suddenly appears and takes him to Diagon Alley. He is met by Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge, who Harry is certain will expel him from Hogwarts for using under-age magic. However, the matter is surprisingly dropped. While at the Leaky Cauldron, Harry hears Mr. and Mrs. Weasley arguing over whether Harry should be warned about escaped murderer Sirius Black.

There are a few changes at Hogwarts as Harry begins his third year. For one, Hermione is taking nearly twice as many classes, including some taught simultaneously. In addition, two new teachers join the staff: Professor Remus J. Lupin for Defense Against the Dark Arts and Rubeus Hagrid for Care of Magical Creatures. While Lupin's lessons are enjoyable, Hagrid's soon become dreary. During the first class, Draco Malfoy deliberately provokes the hippogriff Buckbeak, a half-horse, half-bird creature, into attacking him. Lucius Malfoy, a powerful Ministry of Magic official, files a complaint against Hagrid. Because Black is at large, Dementors, the inhuman Azkaban Prison guards, patrol Hogwarts. Dementors drain happiness from anything they approach. Harry is particularly affected, and Professor Lupin teaches him the Patronus charm that repels them. During a Quidditch match, several Dementors approach Harry, causing him to faint and fall off his broomstick. Albus Dumbledore stops Harry's fall, but his Nimbus 2000 flies into the Whomping Willow and is destroyed.

Meanwhile, tension grows between Hermione and Ron when Hermione's cat, Crookshanks, continually torments Ron's rat, Scabbers. When Scabbers disappears, leaving blood behind, Ron accuses Crookshanks. At Christmas, an anonymous benefactor sends Harry a superb Firebolt broomstick, although Hermione suspects it was sent by Black. She reports it to Professor Minerva McGonagall, who confiscates it for testing, although it is returned in time for the Quidditch Final. Harry and Ron are furious with Hermione.

In Hogsmeade village, Harry overhears a disturbing conversation that Black was his parents' best friend and is still his godfather and legal guardian. He supposedly divulged the Potters' secret whereabouts to Lord Voldemort and murdered their friend Peter Pettigrew, as well as twelve Muggle bystanders. Harry vows to kill Black, but he is astonished when he later sees Pettigrew's name on his Marauder's Map, a magical document the Weasley twins gave him showing secret passageways and every person's location within Hogwarts.

As Harry is talking with Professor Trelawney, she goes into a trance and predicts that the Dark Lord's servant will return to him that night. When the Trio learns that Buckbeak will be executed, they visit Hagrid to console him. While there, Scabbers turns up, although Crookshanks chases him to the Whomping Willow. A large dog attacks Ron and drags him and Scabbers into a hole at the tree's base. Harry and Hermione follow, finding a tunnel leading to the Shrieking Shack. Inside, Harry finally confronts Sirius Black, who, as an illegal Animagus, can transform into an animal at will. Lupin, who spotted the group on the Marauder's Map, suddenly bursts in and embraces his old friend Black. Confronted by Hermione, Lupin admits to being a werewolf and also the Map's creator, along with Black, Pettigrew, and James Potter, who was also an illegal Animagus (a stag). Lupin and Black explain that Scabbers is actually Peter Pettigrew in his Animagus form. He is Voldemort's servant, and he betrayed the Potters, framing Black for the crimes. Harry is skeptical until Black and Lupin force Pettigrew back into his human form. Black explains he discovered that Pettigrew was still alive and escaped Azkaban to kill him.

As the group heads back to the castle, the full moon rises, causing Lupin to turn into a werewolf. During the ensuing commotion, Pettigrew escapes. As Dementors move in to attack Black, Harry, and Hermione, a mysterious figure in the distance casts a powerful stag-shaped Patronus, scattering the vicious creatures. Black is captured and taken to the castle where the Dementors intend to suck out his soul.

Hermione reveals she possesses a time-turner, which is how she has been taking so many classes. She and Harry travel back in time three hours, watching themselves go through the night's previous events. They set Buckbeak free and return to the Whomping Willow. As the dementors are about to attack the "other" Harry and Black, Harry suddenly realizes that the mysterious figure he saw earlier was actually himself. He casts the powerful Patronus that disperses the dementors. Black and Buckbeak escape as the timeline restores itself to normal. Harry is deeply disappointed he will be unable to live with his godfather, but takes comfort in knowing that Black is safe—for now.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

The fourth book begins as Frank Bryce, the Riddle manor's elderly caretaker, sees lights inside the abandoned house. Investigating, he overhears Lord Voldemort and Peter Pettigrew (Wormtail) plotting Harry Potter's death. Frank is discovered and killed; at that same moment, Harry awakes with his scar hurting and having seen the murder in his dream.

Soon after, Harry departs for the Quidditch World Cup with Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, the Weasley family and Amos and Cedric Diggory. Following the match, Death Eaters, Lord Voldemort's servants, storm the camp, creating panic and mayhem. The Trio flee into the forest where they see the Dark Mark, Lord Voldemort's sign, shot into the night sky. Barty Crouch, the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, arrives and accuses the Trio of conjuring it, but upon investigating, Crouch's house elf, Winky, is found clutching Harry's stolen wand. Crouch is furious and fires Winky.

Harry's fourth year at Hogwarts soon commences. During the Welcoming Feast, Professor Dumbledore announces that the Triwizard Tournament will be held at Hogwarts. The centuries old inter-school competition was discontinued because it became too dangerous, but has been recently revived. The tournament has three difficult tasks, one held during each school term.

The Goblet of Fire will choose one student from each competing school. Because the tournament is so dangerous, students must be at least 17-years old to enter. Cedric Diggory is chosen as the Hogwarts' champion, Fleur Delacour is selected for Beauxbatons Academy, and Durmstrang Institute is represented by Viktor Krum. The Goblet unexpectedly selects a fourth champion—Harry Potter—even though Harry never entered his name and is underage.

Harry is guided through the tournament by Professor Alastor Moody, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and a former Auror. In the first task, the champions must retrieve a golden egg from a dragon. With advice from Hagrid, Moody, and Hermione, Harry uses his broom to fly past the dragon and capture the egg, earning high marks. The second task requires retrieving something (or someone) important to them that is hidden in Hogwarts' lake. Dobby gives Harry gillyweed so he can breathe underwater. He rescues Ron, earning him second place.

For the third task, the champions must navigate a large maze filled with dangerous obstacles. Shortly before the event, Harry and Viktor Krum are startled when a disheveled Mr. Crouch emerges from the forest, mumbling incoherently and demanding to see Dumbledore. Harry runs for help, but when he returns with Dumbledore, they find Krum unconscious and Crouch missing.

While waiting in Dumbledore's office, Harry peers inside a pensieve containing the professor's memories. In one memory, Harry sees a wizarding trial in which Barty Crouch, Jr., a Death Eater, is sentenced to Azkaban by his father, Crouch Sr. Harry also hears testimony that Severus Snape was once a Death Eater.

During the third task, Harry and Diggory successfully navigate the maze. Because they helped each other, they agree to grab the Cup simultaneously. Unknown to them, it is actually a portkey that transports them to an old cemetery. Awaiting is Peter Pettigrew, who is carrying what appears to be a deformed infant. The hideous creature orders Pettigrew to kill Diggory. Harry is then bound to a tombstone, and Pettigrew uses Harry's blood, a bone from Voldemort's long-dead father, and his own severed hand in a bizarre ritual that restores Lord Voldemort to his full body and power. Voldemort now carries Harry's blood within him and is no longer affected by the magic that has protected the boy since infancy.

Voldemort reveals that his servant at Hogwarts ensured Harry would win the tournament and be brought to the graveyard. After summoning his Death Eaters, Voldemort challenges Harry to a duel. Unknown to Voldemort, his and Harry's wands are "brothers", each containing the same magical core (a tail feather from a phoenix). As the wands' streams interlock, a Priori Incantatem effect occurs, causing the spirit echoes of Voldemort's victims, including Cedric Diggory and James and Lily Potter, to spill out from his wand. The echoes momentarily protect Harry, allowing him to grab the portkey and escape to Hogwarts with Diggory's body.

After Voldemort's plan fails, Moody attempts to kill Harry, but he is saved by Dumbledore, Snape, and McGonagall. Moody is exposed as Barty Crouch, Jr. who escaped Azkaban and used a Polyjuice Potion to impersonate the real Alastor Moody, who is trapped in a magical trunk in his office. Crouch Jr. murdered his father and entered Harry's name into the Goblet of Fire, covertly ensuring that Harry completed each difficult task. Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge arrives at Hogwarts accompanied by a Dementor. Fudge refutes Dumbledore's claim that Voldemort has returned and before Crouch can repeat his confession, the Dementor sucks out his soul.

Dumbledore quickly revives the Order of the Phoenix. At Cedric's memorial, Dumbledore, against the Ministry's orders, tells students the truth about Cedric's death and that Voldemort has returned.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Harry Potter is spending an agitating summer in Privet Drive: not only is he bracing himself for the catastrophe that is certain to accompany Voldemort's return, but he has had little contact from the wizarding world. When Harry and his cousin Dudley are attacked by Dementors in Little Whinging, Harry repels them with a Patronus Charm. An owl letter soon arrives stating Harry has been expelled from Hogwarts for performing magic outside school. Several more letters arrive in quick succession: Arthur Weasley and Sirius Black instruct Harry to remain in the house, while another overturns his expulsion and orders him to appear at a hearing at the Ministry of Magic.

Order of the Phoenix members arrive to escort Harry to their secret headquarters at the Black family home, 12 Grimmauld Place in London. The Weasleys, Hermione, and Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, are there. Harry learns that Voldemort is building an army and is attempting to retrieve a "weapon". Arthur Weasley escorts Harry to his hearing. He is cleared of all charges after testimony from Dumbledore, and from Harry's neighbour, Mrs. Figg.

When the students return to Hogwarts, they are surprised to hear that Dolores Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, has been appointed by the Ministry as the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. She refuses to teach real defense methods and only lectures from Ministry-approved theory. It becomes clear she is there to spy on and take control of the school and is soon appointed High Inquisitor, arbitrarily imposing rules and regulations. She also harbours racist hatred for "half-breeds", such as centaurs, werewolves, and similar creatures. She considers Rubeus Hagrid (a half-giant) and Sybill Trelawney incompetent, and sacks Trelawney (Hagrid is dismissed later). Although Dumbledore is unable to prevent Trelawney's dismissal, he invokes his authority to allow her to remain in the castle and appoints a new Divination teacher - the centaur, Firenze.

Harry has been having disturbing dreams about running down a hallway and attempting to open a door in the Ministry of Magic's Department of Mysteries. He also dreams he is a snake attacking Ron's father. Mr. Weasley is indeed found injured at the Ministry, suffering from severe venomous snake bites. Harry fears he is being possessed by Voldemort. In response, Dumbledore has Severus Snape teach Harry Occlumency to block his mind from intrusion, but their mutual animosity ends their lessons prematurely.

Hermione blackmails journalist Rita Skeeter into writing a favourable article about Harry witnessing Voldemort's return. Ravenclaw student Luna Lovegood's father publishes the story in his paper, *The Quibbler*. Furious, Umbridge bans the tabloid from the school, but the story spreads rapidly, gathering support for Harry. Many in the wizarding community also now believe Harry.

Hermione convinces Harry to secretly teach students Defense Against the Dark Arts. They name their clandestine group "Dumbledore's Army", or D.A. for short, to mock the Ministry of Magic, which fears Dumbledore is creating a secret wizard army. When Umbridge uncovers the group's meetings, Dumbledore claims that he organised it. Confronted by two Aurors (Dawlish and Shacklebolt), Minister Fudge, Percy Weasley, and Umbridge, Dumbledore easily disables them and is spectacularly whisked away by his phoenix, Fawkes. Umbridge is appointed Headmistress and imposes even tighter control. Fed up, the Weasley twins instigate a revolt, causing mayhem throughout the school while the staff pointedly do nothing to help Umbridge regain control.

Harry receives a vision that Sirius is being tortured at the Department of Mysteries, although Hermione suspects it may be a trap. Harry desperately attempts to contact Sirius at Grimmauld Place via the Floo Network in Umbridge's office fireplace, but he is caught. Umbridge reveals it was she who sent the Dementors to attack Harry during the summer. As she is about to use the Cruciatus Curse on him, Hermione claims that Dumbledore has hidden a powerful weapon in the Forbidden Forest. She leads Harry and Umbridge into the forest where they encounter centaurs. Umbridge foolishly insults them and an angry centaur picks up Umbridge and carries her off screaming into the woods. When Hagrid's giant half-brother, Grawp crashes onto the scene, Hermione and Harry escape amid the chaos.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione, along with Luna, Ginny, and Neville fly to the Ministry of Magic on the school's Thestrals, unaware they are being lured into a trap. When they arrive at the Department of Mysteries, they are ambushed by Death Eaters. Voldemort seeks a prophecy contained in a glass sphere there and needs Harry to retrieve it for him.

The students heroically fight the Death Eaters, but they are outmatched. As they are nearly defeated, Order members arrive. During the ensuing battle, the glass sphere is shattered and the prophecy lost. Sirius is blasted with a spell by his Death Eater cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange and, falling backwards, disappears through a mysterious veiled archway. Lupin restrains Harry, telling him that Sirius is dead. Dumbledore arrives and the Death Eaters, except for Lestrange, are captured. Lord Voldemort appears and duels with Dumbledore as Ministry of Magic employees arrive in time to see the Dark Lord before he Disapparates, taking Lestrange with him. Cornelius Fudge finally admits Voldemort has returned and Harry's interview with Rita Skeeter is reprinted in the Daily Prophet.

Later, Dumbledore apologizes to Harry for withholding information over the past year. He reveals the lost prophecy, for it was to him that it was first told: either Harry or Voldemort must die at the hand of the other, for neither can live while the other survives. Dumbledore also reveals that due to when the boy was predicted to be born, Neville Longbottom could also have been the child in the prophecy. Dumbledore believes Voldemort chose to attack Harry because he is a half-blood like himself; Neville is a pureblood. In so doing, the Dark Lord marked Harry as his equal.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Voldemort and his Death Eaters openly wreak havoc and chaos throughout Britain. Following public outcry over Cornelius Fudge's mishandling of the Voldemort situation, he is forced to resign, and is succeeded by Rufus Scrimgeour as the new Minister for Magic. As a result, Arthur Weasley receives a promotion.

At his home in Spinner's End, Severus Snape receives a visit from Draco Malfoy's mother Narcissa and her sister, Bellatrix Lestrange. Narcissa swears Snape to an Unbreakable Vow, ensuring he will protect Draco and, should her son fail, complete his mission for the Dark Lord.

Albus Dumbledore arrives at the Dursley's and asks Harry Potter to accompany him to see retired professor Horace Slughorn. With unwitting help from Harry, Dumbledore persuades Slughorn to resume his old teaching post at Hogwarts. Harry then spends the remaining summer months at The Burrow with the Weasleys and Hermione, who is also visiting. To his family's dismay (mainly Ginny, Mrs. Weasley, and Fred and George), Bill Weasley has become engaged to Fleur Delacour, the Beauxbatons champion in the Triwizard Tournament. Harry, Ron, and Hermione receive their O.W.L. results. Hermione receives high marks in all her subjects, but Ron and Harry fail Divination and History of Magic. They are also unable to take N.E.W.T.-level Potions because Snape only accepts "O" (Outstanding) grades. The course is a requirement to Harry's ambition of becoming an Auror.

As school begins, Snape is surprisingly announced as the new Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor while Slughorn takes his place as the Potions teacher. Since Slughorn only requires a minimum "E" grade (Exceeds Expectations) at O.W.L. to take his N.E.W.T.-level Potion classes, Harry and Ron are now able to sign up. Slughorn lends Harry and Ron old Potions textbooks. Harry's copy is marked as the property of "The Half-Blood Prince". The talented former owner's handwritten notes help Harry excel in the class. As a reward, Slughorn gives him a small vial of Felix Felicis, a good luck potion.

As the year progresses, more Death Eater attacks occur that may be linked to events happening at Hogwarts. On the first Hogsmeade visit, Katie Bell, a Gryffindor student, is seriously injured when she is forced to carry a cursed necklace while under the Imperius Curse. Harry suspects Malfoy or another Death Eater is involved. In another incident, Ron is accidentally poisoned when he drinks mead that was intended for Dumbledore - Harry's quick thinking saves his life when he forces a bezoar, a poison antidote, into his mouth. Hermione is so distraught over Ron's near death, that the two end their ongoing feud, and Ron breaks up with Lavender Brown, whom he was dating mostly to annoy Hermione because she had kissed Viktor Krum. Ron and Hermione's continual bickering had caused Harry to fear they would never reconcile. In the meantime, Harry realizes that he has feelings for Ginny when he jealously observes her kissing her boyfriend, Dean Thomas.

Dumbledore tutors Harry in private lessons using his Pensieve to view collected memories about Voldemort's past. A memory belonging to Slughorn is partially missing. Aided by the Felix Felicis potion, Harry retrieves it from him. Dumbledore speculates that Voldemort has split his soul into seven fragments, storing six pieces in Horcruxes to grant himself immortality, while leaving the seventh in his own body. Two Horcruxes have been destroyed (Tom Riddle's diary by Harry[HP2] and Marvolo Gaunt's ring by Dumbledore).

When Harry finds Malfoy sobbing in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, they begin hurling curses at each other. Harry casts Sectumsempra (a spell gleaned from the Half-Blood Prince's annotations), causing large slashes across Malfoy's body. Snape arrives and saves Malfoy. Recognizing the spell, he orders Harry to hand over his Potions book. Harry instead gives him Ron's copy. Snape assigns Harry detention for the same day as the Quidditch finals. After detention, Harry learns that Gryffindor won the finals, with Ginny Weasley as their substitute Seeker. During the victory celebration, Harry's suppressed feelings for Ginny are revealed when he spontaneously kisses her; Ginny had broken up with Dean Thomas several days before, and she and Harry begin dating.

Just before Harry and Dumbledore leave to find another Horcrux (Salazar Slytherin's locket), Harry gives the remaining Felix Felicis to Ron, Hermione and Ginny. He has suspected all year that Malfoy may be a Death Eater and has confided his suspicions to Dumbledore, who seemed unconcerned. He learns later that Dumbledore had Snape investigate Malfoy. One day, Harry learns from Professor Trelawney that it was Snape who had passed information to Voldemort about Harry's parents fifteen years before; enraged, Harry confronts Dumbledore about trusting Snape after what he had done. Dumbledore reveals that he has learned the location of one of the Horcruxes, and invites Harry to accompany him in retrieving it. Believing Malfoy and Snape are involved in something sinister, Harry asks Ron, Hermione, Luna Lovegood, Neville Longbottom, and Ginny to patrol the halls while he and Dumbledore are gone. Harry then Disapparates with Dumbledore to a secret cave. Upon retrieving the Horcrux, Dumbledore is seriously weakened by a potion he drank in order to uncover the locket inside a basin.

Returning to Hogsmeade, Harry and Dumbledore see Lord Voldemort's Dark Mark hovering over Hogwarts. They borrow broomsticks from Madam Rosmerta, whom they later discover to be under the Imperius Curse. They fly to the Astronomy Tower where they are ambushed by Draco Malfoy. Dumbledore paralyzes Harry, who is under his Invisibility Cloak, just before Draco disarms Dumbledore. Draco reveals that he helped the Death Eaters enter Hogwarts, although Dumbledore discerns that the obviously frightened boy was coerced into aiding Voldemort's followers. In the meantime, members of the Order of the Phoenix (including Remus Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, Professor McGonagall and Bill Weasley) battle the Death Eaters.

Death Eaters appear on the Astronomy Tower where the Dark Mark is and urge Draco to fulfill his mission—killing Dumbledore—but Draco is reluctant and apparently scared. Snape arrives; still weak from the potion, Dumbledore entreats Snape with an ambiguous plea. Snape kills Dumbledore with the Avada Kedavra killing curse. The spell's force hurls Dumbledore's body over the tower wall. Upon Dumbledore's death, Harry is freed from the paralysing spell. The Death Eaters flee, and Harry pursues Snape, who identifies himself as the Half-Blood Prince in a short-lived duel before escaping with Malfoy. Snape states how Harry doesn't have the strength to defeat him and he is weak just like his father, only enraging Harry even more, but they still escape leaving Harry angry and very upset.

Harry recovers the locket from Dumbledore's body only to discover that it is a fake. Inside is a note from someone with the initials "R.A.B." who has stolen the real Horcrux and has vowed that it will be destroyed with the hope that when Voldemort meets his match he "will be mortal once more".

The school year ends abruptly with Dumbledore's funeral, which is attended by hundreds of people, including the students, teachers, and magical creatures that live in the Forbidden Forest. Professor McGonagall is appointed Hogwarts' interim headmistress, although the school may not reopen. Professor Slughorn replaces Snape as the head of Slytherin house. Regardless, Harry decides to leave Hogwarts to search for the remaining Horcruxes. Ron and Hermione vow to accompany him, while Harry ends his relationship with Ginny to protect her from Voldemort. The book concludes as Harry looks forward to Bill and Fleur's wedding and being comforted that "...there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione".