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Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

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Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Illustrated by Mary GrandPre. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0439784549. \$29.99. 652 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction;

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince definitely lives up to the hype and excitement that have preceded it for months. Harry's journey continues in the newest installment of the series with more of the elements that we have always loved in Rowling's writing; suspense, comedy, mystery, fantasy, tenderness, and even a little romance. Harry is once more thrown into his enchanted life at Hogwarts, but this time with the oppressive knowledge of his role in the eventual defeat of Voldemort looming constantly over his head. Life seems to go on as normal, however, as he attends classes, plays Quidditch (now as the team captain), and enjoys many misadventures with best buds Ron and Hermione. His classes have gotten harder this year as he has additional private lessons with Dumbledore, prepares for the Apparition Test and N.E.W.T exams. Harry counts himself lucky when he comes across an old Potions textbook with very helpful notes from a former student known only as the Half-Blood Prince. With the help of the book, he quickly becomes the best in his potions class (no longer taught by Professor Snape, who has finally gotten his dream job as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher). The rise of Voldemort to power has not gone unnoticed inside Hogwarts, and Harry is on constant alert as strange things start happening in the school. Draco Malfoy has been disappearing inside the Room of Requirement for long periods of time, and two students have been attacked by Dark objects that have been snuck into the school. Meanwhile, in his lessons with Dumbledore, Harry is studying the life of Voldemort. By way of the Pensieve, he explores the memories of those who saw Voldemort grow up and come to power. Through this exploration, Dumbledore hopes to show Harry Voldemort's motivations and discover his weaknesses. Everything comes to a head at the end of the school year as the Death Eaters invade the school for a battle against the Order of the Phoenix resulting in the death of a dear friend, and Harry finally discovers how to defeat Voldemort once and for all.

The newest installment of the much loved Harry Potter series brings readers one step closer to discovering the full mystery surrounding "the Boy Who Lived." Rowling once again provides us with a page-turner and then leaves us counting down the days until the next book is published. Harry has matured but is still the fun loving adventurous kid that young and old can relate to, only with a more serious side as he takes his place as "the Chosen One." This book is significantly darker and might be a bit too intense for a younger audience. The writing at times seemed to be a bit scattered and somewhat hard to follow but the intrigue of the plot keeps readers moving and ready for more. Overall, this exciting book brings out a wide range of emotions in its readers including fear, hope, happiness, excitement and sadness. Most of all, the reader is left with a profound sense of anticipation for the 7th and final book in the Harry Potter series and to finally found out how the story will end.