



The Casual Vacancy by J. K. Rowling

About the author:

Joanne Rowling was born in July 1965 at Yate General Hospital in England and grew up in Chepstow, Gwent where she went to Wyedean Comprehensive.

Jo left Chepstow for Exeter University, where she earned a French and Classics degree, her course including one year in Paris. As a postgraduate she moved to London and worked as a researcher at Amnesty International among other jobs. She started writing the Harry Potter series during a delayed Manchester to London King's Cross train journey, and during the next five years, outlined the plots for each book and began writing the first novel.

Jo then moved to northern Portugal, where she taught English as a foreign language. She married in October 1992 and gave birth to a daughter in 1993. When the marriage ended, she and Jessica returned to the UK to live in Edinburgh, where ***Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone*** was eventually completed. The book was first published by Bloomsbury Children's Books in June 1997, under the name J.K. Rowling. The "K", for Kathleen, her paternal grandmother's name was added at her publisher's request who thought that a woman's name would not appeal to the target audience of young boys.

The second title in the series, ***Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets***, was published in July 1998 and was No. 1 in the adult hardback bestseller charts for a month after publication. ***Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*** was published on 8th July 1999 to worldwide acclaim and spent four weeks at No.1 in the UK adult hardback bestseller charts.

The fourth book in the series, ***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*** was published on 8th July 2000 with a record first print run of 1 million copies for the UK. It quickly broke all records for the greatest number of books sold on the first day of publication in the UK.

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Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix was published in Britain, the USA, Canada and Australia on 21st June 2003 and broke the records set by ***Harry Potter & the Goblet of Fire*** as the fastest selling book in history. ***Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*** was published in the UK, US and other English-speaking countries on 16th July 2005 and also achieved record sales.

The seventh and final book in the series, ***Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows***, was published in the UK, US and other English speaking countries in 2007.

J.K. Rowling has also written two small volumes, which appear as the titles of Harry's school books within the novels. ***Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*** and ***Quidditch Through The Ages*** were published in March 2001 in aid of Comic Relief.

In December 2008, ***The Tales of Beedle the Bard*** was published in aid of the Children's High Level Group (now Lumos).

As well as an OBE for services to children's literature, J.K. Rowling is the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees including the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord, France's Légion d'Honneur, and the Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award, and she has been a Commencement Speaker at Harvard University USA. She supports a wide number of charitable causes through her charitable trust Volant, and is the founder of Lumos, a charity working to transform the lives of disadvantaged children.

J.K. Rowling lives in Edinburgh with her husband and three children.

J.K. Rowling's latest book, ***The Casual Vacancy***, her first novel for adults, was published in English in September 2012.

Source: Author's website (<http://www.jkrowling.com>)

About this book:

When Barry Fairbrother dies unexpectedly in his early forties, the little town of Pagford is left in shock.



Seemingly an English idyll, with a cobbled market square and an ancient abbey, what lies behind the pretty façade is a town at war.

Rich at war with poor, teenagers at war with their parents, wives at war with their husbands, teachers at war with their pupils...Pagford is not what it first seems.

And the empty seat left by Barry on the parish council soon becomes the catalyst for the biggest war the town has yet seen. Who will triumph in an election fraught with passion, duplicity and unexpected revelations?

Blackly comic, thought-provoking and constantly surprising, *The Casual Vacancy* is J.K. Rowling's first novel for adults.

Source: Author's website (<http://www.jkrowling.com>)

Discussion Questions:

1. Before reading, did you have certain expectations for this book based on the Harry Potter series? If so, does *The Casual Vacancy* meet these expectations?
2. The book has more than 30 main characters. Did you have trouble keeping them and storylines in order?
3. Do you think the profanity, violence and sex is excessive and sensational? Is Rowling trying to prove that she can write for adults or does it enhance the plot?
4. Which storyline with which characters is your favorite and why? Least favorite?
5. Rowling describes the book as a "comic tragedy". What does that mean? Some have talked about the wit, others described the lack of it. Do you find her wit on display in the book?
6. Many reviewers and readers complain that the plot takes is slow to get off the



ground and drags in some parts. What do you think? Is *The Casual Vacancy* too long at 500+ pages?

7. Before the success of Harry Potter, Rowling had experiences with poverty. Does knowing this increase the creditability of the Krystal character?

8. In many interviews, Rowling states that she felt she "had to write" this book and that it's very personal to her. Several characters and experiences can be paralled to her life. For example, Howard Mollinson and Simon Price are her estranged real-life father; Gavin is her first husband; Kay Bawden is a young, single J.K. Do you see any of your own relationships in the book? Does the story cause you to examine any of your relationships?

9. Is the ending satisfying? Does Rowling tie up loose ends or does she leave some things unanswered?

Source: *Lit Lovers* (<http://litlovers.com>)

Other formats available at Halifax Public Libraries:

- Audiobook (on CD)
- DVD (Adaptation)
- eBook
- French
- Large Print