



# **Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon**

*Melissa Anelli , J.K. Rowling (Introduction)*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

# **Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon**

*Melissa Anelli , J.K. Rowling (Introduction)*

## **Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon** Melissa Anelli , J.K. Rowling (Introduction)

### **THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS WERE JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY...**

During the brief span of just one decade, hundreds of millions of perfectly ordinary people made history: they became the only ones who would remember what it was like when the Harry Potter saga was still unfinished. What was like to seek out friends, families, online forums, fan fiction, and podcasts to get a fix between novels. When the potential death of a character was a hotter bet than the World Series. When the unfolding story of a boy wizard changed the way books are read for all time.

And a webmistress of the Leaky Cauldron, one of the most popular Harry Potter sites on the Internet, Melissa Anelli had a front row seat to it all. Whether it was helping Scholastic stop leaks and track down counterfeiters, hosting live PotterCasts at bookstores across the country, touring with the wizard rock band Harry and the Potters, or traveling to Edinburgh to interview J.K. Rowling personally, Melissa was at the center of the Harry Potter tornado, and nothing about her life would ever be the same.

The Harry Potter books are a triumph of the imagination that did far more than break sales records for all time. They restored the world's sense of wonder and took on a magical life of their own. Now the series has ended, but the story is not over. With remembrances from J.K. Rowling's editors, agents, publicists, fans and Rowling herself, Melissa Anelli takes us on a personal journey through every aspect of the Harry Potter phenomenon--from his very first spell to his lasting impact on the way we live the dream.

## **Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon Details**

Date : Published November 4th 2008 by Gallery Books

ISBN : 9781416554950

Author : Melissa Anelli , J.K. Rowling (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 356 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir



[Download Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His F ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon Melissa Anelli , J.K. Rowling (Introduction)**



## **From Reader Review Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon for online ebook**

### **Cori Reed says**

If you grew up with the Harry Potter fandom in the early days you will appreciate this book. I cried about 50 times while reading this (seriously...), not because it's sad, but because of just *how much* Harry Potter shaped not only my life, but the lives of literally millions of kids.

This book made me so nostalgic for my early life waiting for each Harry Potter book to be released and spending almost all my spare time on sites like The Leaky Cauldron and MuggleNet obsessing over every tiny detail.

If you were a nerdy young teen in the early 2000s like me who could not get enough of Harry, you'll likely walk away from this book feeling all sorts of things.

---

### **Kristy K says**

3.5 Stars

Since I couldn't delve into the world of Harry Potter like I needed (all of my books are in storage! and my library's copies are all checked out), this was the next best thing. Anelli delves into the world of Potter taking a look at the books, the fans, and everything in between. I'll admit many parts made me mushy and wishing I could relive certain scenes for the first time again.

It does get slow at times when she talks about the lives of certain super fans, but on a whole this is a great addition to anyone's Potter collection. (Rowling writes the prologue so you know every Potter fact mentioned must be accurate.)

---

### **Cheryl Klein says**

I am a good friend of the author's and I appear fairly often in this book, so I'm cheerfully biased about it. But judged solely as a piece of writing, it is excellent and essential reportage about the history of the Harry Potter books and phenomenon -- the only book with firsthand accounts from J. K. Rowling, her agent, her editors and publicists, and various other people involved in the publication of the series or who helped to make it big. Melissa covers the growth of the online fandom, from the first websites through the shipping wars, and follows the band Harry and the Potters on a week of their spring 2007 tour. She interviews Laura Mallory, the Georgia woman frequently dismissed as crazy for her quest to ban the HP books from schools, and while they hardly come to agree on the series, the interview is revealing and enlightening. Finally, this is a moving memoir of the way a love of something, and the courage to pursue that love, can change a person's life, as Melissa moves from editorial-assistant peon to reporter and Webmistress extraordinaire; and it's a fun walk down Memory Lane for any HP fan, who will remember their own excitement about the first movie, the fifth

book, the series end.

---

### **Allison (The Allure of Books) says**

I have wanted to read this book for a long time. Harry Potter was my life for about ten years, and the characters became my family. While the books were being published, all the other Potter devotees felt like family too. How many hours-days-months did I spend obsessing over every little detail J.K. Rowling let slip, reading MWPP fan-fiction and making fun of the people that actually thought Hermoine would end up with Harry? I'm pretty sure the amount of time I invested in this world is slightly insane - but I'm positive I don't regret a single second.

I wanted this book to capture that. For the most part, I think it does. If anyone can understand devoting yourself to Harry Potter, it is Melissa Anelli. She made a career out of it! She accurately captures a lot of great memories from the years when the books were still being released. She had me smiling through a lot of the book. So, while I enjoyed it, I can't imagine a lot of people that don't understand and appreciate the Potter years getting much out of it.

In many ways, it tells the story of my generation (it even touches on 9/11!), because no one else will ever read or experience Harry Potter the way we did. We got to be a part of the process - we were told the story a little at a time, so we appreciate each book more than anyone that gets the whole series at once ever could.

But at the same time, we can all envy new readers. Melissa Anelli says it well (to set the stage, the following takes place a few days after the release of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows):

*I leaned against the metal pole of the subway car as we started chugging into the heart of New York City. If my music hadn't stopped playing I might never have noticed - one, two, three, four at least ten people were holding up their giant orange books. Some were halfway through, some nearly all the way through. Some propped it on their legs, and a few more had taken off the jacket so as not to be inconspicuous. They spanned all ages, and were all engrossed.*

*One young woman, not much younger than me, sat near the end of my eye line; she was reading too, her colorful backpack on her lap and her arms circling it, her book acting as a buckle to hold it in place. I traveled to the next pole down to get a surreptitious closer look; she wasn't reading Deathly Hallows at all. Her book wasn't orange but rose and water and sand, and featured a kid on a broomstick and a white unicorn. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. She didn't notice me staring at her.*

*Oh, I envy you, I thought, but was smiling for her. She had just begun.*

---

### **Mallory says**

I knew about the Harry Potter "fandom" (websites dedicated to obsessing over Harry Potter, which is fun when the books are about to come out and creepy and dull during the long stretches between novels) and thought this book sounded cute. I was interested in hearing about the fansites and getting some inside information. There is a section dedicated to Wizard Rock (Harry and the Potters) which I think is funny and worth reading. But good god, Anelli's writing style is annoying and self indulgent. Ever read a really talented

teenager's writing? Their style isn't as bad as the crap that is Twilight but it's still very ME-ME-ME!!! Anelli's writing is very ME-ME-ME. The section where she is able to comfort someone younger than her after 9/11 by talking to them about Harry Potter on a Harry Potter forum (yes, you read that right) is probably the worst of it, except for maybe the ongoing fight between this young woman in her 20s and her mother - mom wants Melissa to get a real job, but Melissa wants to live at home in her childhood bedroom, complain to her online friends that her mom is sooooo unfaaaiiiir, and run a website for a "living" (where she doesn't actually get paid, of course). Yeah, so even though there's some good stuff in this book, homegirl needs an editor and a heavy dose of reality.

---

### **Ciara says**

i confess i feel like a dork for even having read this book, which is all about the fandom & media phenomena surrounding the harry potter books. now, i am a big fan of the harry potter books, but i don't frequent fan sites or wear scarves declaring my allegiance to certain hogwarts houses or anything like that. this book was written by someone who runs a fansite (the leaky cauldron) & is all about the types of people who wear scarves as an expression of their harry potter love, & honestly, the whole thing squicked me A LOT. i mean, it was really fascinating...in the way that a terrible gruesome car accident is fascinating. there is a whole chapter on wizard rock, for example. now, again, i like harry & the potters. i have seen them play a bunch of times. but all of the sudden, their shows were over-run by teenage girls in gryffindor scarves giggling over which degeorge brother was cuter, & i couldn't bring myself, as a grown woman, to have fun at their shows anymore. i just felt embarrassed. there is a chapter in here about the "shipping wars"--the online debates & flame wars that broke out between fans who thought hermione should hook up with ron versus those who thought she was destined for love with harry. i mean...really? it's bad enough that these kinds of arguments even happened, but that they would be written up in a book in such a breathless manner, as if understanding the causes of & ramifications of the "shipping wars" was crucial to understanding the harry potter phenomenon as a historical curiosity. it reminded me of how sometimes i will have some dumb argument with an idiot on a feminist messageboard & jared will come home from work & i'll be all, "listen to this e-argument i had with someone!" & jared will be all, "wow, i really can't believe you wasted even two minutes engaged in this, & now you are wasting even more time telling me about it." i always feel embarrassed afterward, like he caught me playing with a stuffed unicorn or something equally as infantile. THIS ENTIRE BOOK IS DEVOTED TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE THIS KIND OF INFANTILE, SOCIALLY BACKWARD RELATIONSHIP WITH HARRY POTTER FANDOM & it seriously freaks me out. & early on in the book, the author writes about 9/11 & how no one knew where her sister was (her sister worked in the world trade center) & how her harry potter fandom buddies kept her company on instant messenger & really helped her through that rough time, & how she found friends in harry potter fandom, friends who really cared about her, etc. the story was meant to illustrate the depth of friendship that sprang up between fans, but it just made me incredibly sad, imagining a grown woman in a panic over how her sister might have been killed in a collapsing building (she wasn't; she was fine) turning to the online friends she made in fandom around a children's book. i mean, the whole book kind of begs for a lack of derision from non-fans, but i just couldn't get there. i love the books & all, but really, this account of fan culture made me really sad. in a sick, pleasureable way.

---

### **Whitney Atkinson says**

3.5 Stars

This book is a fun read, but I think the more time that passes, the more dated and irrelevant this will become. Since so many new things have occurred in the Harry Potter world, a lot of this info is obsolete or really requires some adding onto.

For the most part this was a fun and informative listen, but I do think two things dragged this down:

1. This is told from the POV of a fan site reporter, so a lot of the info is skewed to her experiences of reading the books and seeing the author and stuff, and not necessarily an objective/comprehensive guide to the Harry Potter world

and 2. two of these chapters were dedicated to Harry Potter rock bands I'd never heard of, didn't care about, and when I looked them up, they were horrible. I could have skipped those 100 pages and missed nothing.

If you're truly a Harry Potter fan then this might be worth the read, but get to it soon, because the more time that passes, the more that this dates itself, and I doubt it'll age well.

---

### **Monica Edinger says**

This book defies my rating it. I mean, I'd rate it completely differently for different audiences.

For avid Harry Potter fans familiar with the Leaky Cauldron, fan fiction, the shipping wars, Harry and the Potters, and so forth the book is probably five stars. Melissa captures, with vim and tremendous enthusiasm, the history of Harry Potter fandom filtered through her personal experience. No doubt those on the wrong side of certain conflicts (notably those fans who were advocating for Hermione and Harry's union) may feel differently. But I'd guess for many fans, reading Melissa's book is a way to go back in time and reexperience much of what went on throughout those Harry Potter years.

Then there are people like me. I consider myself a fan, but not on the level of those in Melissa's world. I enjoyed the books tremendously and loved the way kids took the series for their own. I'm a lover of fantasy and, as Melissa notes in the book, at the time Harry Potter first came out there was not a whole lot of fantasy being published for children. The emphasis was on realistic fiction back in 1998. And so I saw firsthand, beginning in September 1998 when the first book came out in the US, the appeal and kid-word-of-mouth that made these books so remarkably successful. At first my copy was passed around my classroom among the handful of fantasy readers (one girl and a bunch of boys). One parent managed to pick up the second book for us in London and so it went. (Melissa did an excellent job going over the publishing history of the books, by the way.) It was with the 4th that all hell broke loose and the books' fans went from being part of a tiny subculture to a huge one. The movies, the Internet, television, and such raised the situation to something quite remarkable. And I loved following it all. So for a person like me, not a fan like Melissa or those in her immediate circle, the book was a lot of fun to read.

And then there are those who may come to the book without any such experience, just curious about this whole thing. I think the book may be a challenge for them. The best parts, to my mind, for such readers, are those where Melissa's joy and happiness and excitement about the books, the author, and the world she became part of, come through. More challenging may be some of the aspects of this world. I have to admit that I wasn't terribly interested (no offense!) in Harry and the Potters who receive a whole chapter. And I almost think that the whole fan fiction thing probably deserves its own book. I became aware of it during the shipping wars (which I at first thought had something to do with ocean liners), but have to admit that Melissa's presentation was a bit all over the place for those of us on the periphery. She was so deep into it and I did enjoy her view of it all, but can also see that it might be hard to make sense of if you weren't aware

of this before you began reading this book.

But for anyone who went through any part of this, who likes the books, who got a kick out of the whole intensity of midnight releases, the Internet sites, the interviews, the shipping wars, and so forth --- I recommended it.

---

### **Zara says**

This book is Melissa's story. It is my story. It is the story of every other person who has been touched by Harry Potter in any way, no matter how small. And Harry, A History is the story that I will remember for the rest of my life--the story of ten years of epic awesome, with years more to come. Read this book. Period.

---

### **Rachel says**

This is not actually a History of Harry, or even a book about the Harry Potter books. It is a book about one woman's experience with the books. The author, Melissa Anelli, was (is) a major player in the Harry Potter fandom, and she tells her story as an "almost insider." Her perspective is interesting to a point, but for someone (ie, me) who loves Harry, but operated outside the fandom, it isn't really particularly relevant. It kind of just made me mad. I felt like, "I love Harry too, but I didn't quit MY job to follow him."

---

### **Susan Faw says**

Melissa, with a unique perspective, nails everything it means to be a fan of Harry Potter. She brings a concise and personal view of the rise of the Potter franchise. As one of the founders of The Leaky Cauldron website, she has been an active participant in the fandom and the "60 Minutes" of the world of Harry Potter. If you are a fan, this is a must read.

---

### **Becky says**

I admit it, I was a Harry Potter late bloomer. I've told the story before, so suffice it to say that it wasn't until after the 5th book was out that I became a Harry Potter fan. I immediately fell in love with the books and the world... but I missed almost all of the "Harry Potter phenomenon" as it was still in progress.

---

I only had a few friends (back then) that were Harry Potter fans, and we discussed the books excitedly, and re-read them repeatedly, but I didn't know that I was missing this whole world of HP fandom. When the 6th book released, the B&N in my area had already sold their copies and closed up shop by 11:30pm when I got there after racing there from work. I was mad, reamed out the manager, and refused on principle when he offered to open the store again for me to buy a copy. I bought the book from the local grocery store instead. So it wasn't until the 7th book came out that I started to understand the magic of the Harry Potter release parties I'd missed... and the one I went to was small even to my naive eyes. But man, it was exciting. People were dressed up, there were games, the staff was doing trivia, people were practically doing the pee-dance in excitement... and when 12:00am came, the bookstore was like a well oiled machine. Every register opened

and started ringing out excited Potter fans like it was a race.

That experience was amazing, and I'm glad that I got to have at least one before it was all over. Better late than never, huh?

Back then, I never knew the extent of the fandom. I knew there were websites, and I'd visited The Leaky Cauldron and the HP Lexicon. I knew that there was fan fiction, but I was never interested in it. (I'm a purist.) I didn't know that there were bands based on Harry Potter, or that there were podcasts, or conventions or anything like that. I'd seen a few YouTube videos of HP themed music, but I'd always thought it was a parody thing, never a true band. I hadn't realized that the NYT Bestseller list had been fractured by this series, or that it had changed the publishing industry so much. I knew that this series encouraged new young readers, but again, the extent was so much more than I'd thought. So this book was interesting to me, because it shows just how deeply this series touched peoples' lives.

There was a lot of detail in this book that I found fascinating, like the way that Harry Potter and the Philosopher's/Sorcerer's Stone made it against all odds, and how it changed the industry as I mentioned above, but at the same time, I found some parts of the book to get bogged down in too much detail. I listened to this on audio (although I do have the trade paperback as well), and the opening section, about Melissa's excitement that "it was here", went on for too long before saying what "it" was, or giving any real context to the situation at all. Turns out, it was the release date for the 7th and final book, but I think that the way it was written tried for a bit of mystery and excitement, and just failed to get that from me. I kept thinking, "Can we get to the point?" I want to hear about the books, and about the fans and about the phenomenon itself... not one person's squeezing over some mysterious "it" thing the reader doesn't get to be in on. For a while, I thought that "it" was publishing news coming down the pipeline of an exciting new series of books - so, the START of the HP series phenomenon.

I didn't really need to know the color of the dust on the Harry And The Potters' tour van, or exactly how sweaty they were, or that they chose cashmere pullovers because they were less likely to be sweat-stinky. TMI. Really. There were a lot of sections that I feel just kind of got lost in the memories and forgot the point that was supposed to be made.

In addition, aspects of the book were repetitive and disorganized. Anelli would jump from 2007 (the section I mentioned above, once I finally found out the context), to telling the history of the books being written, submitted, published, sold, etc, then on to how Anelli got involved in The Leaky Cauldron (TLC), to 9/11, to book 5, to how Anelli first read the books.. on and on. It was like playing Frogger, hopping around, back and forth. I really, really wanted a more structured format for this book, especially listening on audio. Sometimes it was hard to follow where I was in terms of timelines.

There were several sections that were repeated at least twice, and I found that to be a little tiresome. Once we've covered the basis of 'shipping/shippers, I don't need to rehash what it is again later. We can just move on to how it's relevant to the part of the story being told. I want the history and backstory, but I don't need to know, yet again, what the city by city fan count at a Harry and the Potters show was.

Those criticisms aside, I did really enjoy this book. It made me sad at times, especially during Melissa's recounting of 9/11 and her panic at not knowing where her sister was, but it made me happy that the community of Harry Potter fans that she'd so recently found were able to support her. It made me nostalgic for the experience of reading these books for the first time, and watching this story unfold with each book. I didn't have the long gaps in which to theorize and wonder for most of them, but each new book was a revelation in just how much a story could affect me... and it STILL affects me just the way it did the first

time. I cry with certain deaths, I laugh at the twins, I cheer for Neville finding the courage to stand up again and again.

These books didn't make me a reader; I'd been a reader since I was little. What they made me was a part of a huge community of people who all share the love of an extraordinary series of books which changed almost everything. I think that Harry: A History did a good job at showing that, despite the issues I had with the writing and organization.

I can't wait to revisit Harry Potter again.

---

### **Allison says**

An interesting read. Melissa is a good writer, and I was certainly cheering for her as she met, and interviewed JK Rowling. However, as Melissa discusses the in-depth-ness of many Harry Potter fans, which she treats with a mixture of awe and amusement, she neglects the fact that there are many HP fans who did not travel to conferences, read or write fan-fiction, speculate about the books online etc. etc. The book is written with the assumption that every HP fan was die-hard, neglecting the fact that many simply loved the books. To these readers, some elements of this book will be interesting (apparently there were shipping wars, which had nothing to do with shipping the books, and instead pertained to whether Hermione would date Harry or Ron. And this was a big controversy, apparently).

The book tended to jump around a bit. For example, while introducing the issue of spoilers for HP and the Deathly Hallows, Anelli jumped back to spoilers for the previous books: Spoilers were an issue for HP7 and oh yeah, going back to book 4...

If you were/are a HP fan who was extensively involved in the online fandom, I think you'd love this book- it would probably take the form of "Oh yeah, I remember that happening!".

If you were less involved, the book doesn't really cover "this happened and wow". It's more, "obviously, you knew this happened".

Considering the title: Harry a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, the book covers remarkably little about Harry, the stories or the actual speculation about the books. It's more about the fact that there "obviously" was a lot of speculation (and controversy) about what would happen.

A more apt title would be Harry, A History: Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon

---

### **Shae says**

This book was so disappointing that what I'm going to say is going to be cruel. My biggest complaint about this book is that the title is completely wrong. It would have been better if it had been called "Melissa Anelli's Life in the HP Fandom." Instead I was thinking that it was going to talk about the series and actual events inside of the fandom. But no, it was about her life and there was a lot of stuff that was not even close to related to Harry Potter. How does constantly talking about your friends and whining about your boss fit into this picture? Nothing really fit. The flow of the book also threw me off. One second it talked about the

lead up to the 7th book and the next second it would be discussing the finer points of \*random fandom moment\* from years and years ago. All of it was disjointed, very self-serving, and shallow.

---

### **Janet Blowers says**

Unless you have a deep desire to re-live all the wonder of each release of the Harry Potter phenomenom, I wouldn't reccomend this one. I couldn't even finish it. It was like reading someone else's journal. I was lost after a few pages and after a few chapters I didn't need to be found. I loved all the Harry Potter books and thought this one would be worth while. I guess you can't win them all.

---

### **Beth says**

Boy, what a self-indulgent mess this was. I have to admit, there were enough interesting tidbits for me to keep reading, and it did make me want to re-read the HP books again, but this was like the HP version of Eat, Pray, Love. This should be called Melissa, A History. I am not into the HP intense fandom depicted here, so I just rolled my eyes a lot at things like the shipper wars. The book was also not very well-written; it jumped around a lot in time, which could be confusing, and it wasn't edited well (for example, after "meeting" a friend of Melissa's, in the next chapter we "met" her again). I'm glad I got it from the library and didn't buy it.

---

### **Runa says**

For all the fanfare this book has gotten, I'm not entirely sure all of it is deserved. It is a lovely look back at how the Harry Potter fandom evolved and got to where it is today, but there are some issues I do have with the book. One of the things I noticed was that Melissa told the book like it was a novel, a fictional piece, filled with flowery description that I feel has no place in what is essential a memoir of sorts. The intent of the book is to retell the HP fandom, from start to finish. Melissa pulls this off artfully, but if her intent was to reach the general public, it was not accomplished. From start to finish, this book is full of name-dropping and in-jokes that just another Harry Potter fan would never understand. In this book, the BNFs (Big Name Fans) rule supreme. The other side of the fandom is never shown. It took 90 pages for the first mention of MuggleNet, and all future mentions (of which there were very few and only when absolutely necessary) were cold and snobby. The HPANA is mentioned only once, in the acknowledgements, the Lexicon once, nothing about the humongous controversy, and no mention at all of Veritaserum and other sites out there. The truth is, Melissa fails to mention the side that truly appeals to the general fan. I did not feel, after reading this book, like I was part of the phenomenon, although I know I was, because I read the books, I posted in the communities, I had just as much fun theorizing, but nope, I didn't own a fansite or publish JKR's books, so I clearly don't matter. Probably about 90% of the Harry Potter fans would fall in my boat, not Melissa's. Where is our story? It was a good read, I will not say I disliked it, but I just wish Melissa had shown us the entirety of the HP world, instead of her secluded, high-and-mighty part of it.

Rating: 3.5/5

---

## Kerry says

This book is largely misrepresented - It is not an accurate review of the Harry Potter fandom. Instead, it examines author Melissa Anelli and a select group of others on their experiences with loving Harry Potter. The book reads more like the biography of an overzealous college student than a study in history.

Much of the writing undoubtedly had personal and highly emotional ties for Anelli, but it falls completely flat on paper. It's ludicrous to try following the conversations that many of these people share and the sheer excitement they exhibited over such things as shipping wars and minuscule book spoilers. The entire HP fandom is not represented here, just a hyperactive few who believed themselves to be of the utmost importance and fame.

With all of that said, this still remained a pleasant read. It passed the time and was easy to breeze through. Harry Potter fans may find some of the information interesting and enlightening, such as the origins of the website The Leaky Cauldron and the state of the British children's publishing market in 1996. Just don't take the book's cover to heart when you first start in.

---

## Jamieson says

I am reading the most wonderfully, magnificent, incredible and enjoyable book I have read in ages. It is a breath of fresh air and I'm thrilled that I picked it up. I'm talking about Harry, A History by Melissa Anelli.

I remember the first time I read Harry Potter and The Philosophers Stone.

I had ignored the buzz surrounding Harry Potter for a long time. I remember thinking: No book could possibly be that good. I would see people reading it on the bus, on lunch breaks, line ups. "Bah," I would say. No book could be that good. And I ignored it still.

I'm not sure why I did now. I must have been annoying about it however because one day, my closest friend at the time handed me something. It was a gift certificate. "What's this for?" I asked her.

"If you won't read the damn book, let me buy it for you." She said.

"Which book?"

"You know damn well which book. You use this gift certificate to buy Harry Potter and The Philosophers Stone and nothing else. Then, if you don't like it, you didn't waste any money on it." She glared at me, daring me to argue. "Alright?"

I remember staring at her, unbelieving, and taking the time to light a cigarette before responding. "The book is that good?"

She nodded. "The best." She said. "Just read it and you'll see."

I did what she said. She and I had the same reading tastes and I figured if she said it was good, it probably was. A small part of me still doubted her. But I went to the bookstore at the mall downtown and picked up a copy of Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone. I hopped on a bus to go home and opened the book to the first page.

I remember being spellbound. I was held in place and all my focus was on the words on the pages in front of me. All that existed for me was Harry. I had found it. I had finally found home in the pages of a book.

I have the same feeling when I read Harry, A History by Melissa Anelli. Perhaps you can already guess at what it's about.

Anelli, popular web mistress of the award winning The Leaky Cauldron ([www.leakynews.com](http://www.leakynews.com)), a superb Harry Potter fan site, has penned a book of what the Harry Potter phenomenon was like from the inside out. She has written a stunning history of JK Rowling, the Harry Potter books and the Boy Who Lived. From the first page, I was pulled into what I knew was going to be a treat. I stopped walking and sat down in the middle of a mall on a hard metal chair, people milling about me, totally immersed in the words I was reading. Harry, A History pulled me in from the first words and didn't let go.

The writing is lively and invites the reader to sit, to read, to enjoy. It's lively and engaging and full of fact and tidbits of Harry's beginnings and it's first tentative steps and what it felt like for a fan, for any of us, to experience Harry Potter.

More than that though, it's a beautiful portrait of one woman's struggle to find herself, to find joy in books and finally, in the end, do something useful. It's a brilliant, literary page turner about something that brings joy to so many.

I started it last week and I am fifty pages away from finishing the book a second time. Though there were a lot of things I should have done today, there was nothing that I wanted to do more than read Harry, A History.

You can learn more about the book by visiting [www.harrahhistory.com](http://www.harrahhistory.com)

If you have ever read Harry Potter, or experienced it's life beyond the printed page, you will want to read Harry, A History. Trust me on this. I can't afford to give out gift certificates to all of you; so you're just going to have to take my word for it, okay?

---

## Fosspot says

Let's not beat around the bush - this isn't really a history of the Harry Potter fandom. The title is not deceptive at all - it's an outright lie. This book is actually about the author, Anelli, who is basically just scrabbling at her fifteen minutes of fame. The 'journalist' runs the Leaky Cauldron website - nice, but worth a book? No. Oh but wait, she met J.K Rowling too? Nope, still not worth a book.

I'm not ashamed to say that I've been in the Potter fandom for years - since PoA first came out. I've been to the conferences, partied with the fans and read all the related books that the series has spawned. And I would

*love* a book that studied the *actual* history of said fandom. This, however, is most emphatically *not* it. Yes, the author met J.K Rowling, and this book might have had a redeeming quality if Anelli had included a transcript of that encounter, but no, she just alludes to it, making it frustratingly pointless. As does the constant need for excessive detail, about utterly useless things such as the author's to-do lists or how *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published.

On the technical side, the language of the book is good and the author's use of language is, if not awe-inspiring, better than most. Those who know and - for some bizarre reason - worship the Leaky Cauldron will love this book and champion it to death. For everyone else? It's just a sad, sad waste of a tree.

---