

HARRY POTTER PORTAL TO HISTORY

The Harry Potter books have real world connections through the mythologies of the Greeks, Norse, and Celts. It also has a connection to history and literature, especially English history and literature. You might already know that Nicholas Flamel is a real person who lived in our real world hundreds of years ago. But do you know that there was a famous person named Roger *Lestrangle*? There are many other real historical people and real historical events in the Harry Potter books—some famous, some not so famous.

Some of these people are famous "magicians" in real life who turn up in the Harry Potter books as Chocolate Frog wizard cards that the kids at Hogwarts collect, like Ptolemy the ancient Greek/Egyptian alchemist. Some of the characters from the books have names derived from famous historical figures or families, like Fawkes or Gaunt or Neville. Most of these names would be instantly recognizable to Rowling's British readers, but since readers in the U.S. do not have the same cultural or historical lessons growing up these references might be lost on us. We'll look at these real historical people and events.

Famous People and Events (in alphabetical order)

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA (1486-1535)

In Harry Potter Cornelius Agrippa is a wizard who appears on a Chocolate Frog trading card.

In History Cornelius Agrippa was a German doctor, astrologer, mystic, and alchemist who lived during the 15th and 16th centuries. His most famous work was *The Occult Philosophy*, which is a defense of magic.

Agrippa believed that magic could be found in the natural world and mathematics. He was a mystic in that he believed you could touch the divine through nature. He wrote about the magic of the natural world such as trees, plants, stones, etc. and he also wrote about the magic of numbers, angels, talismans and amulets. His writings were very controversial.

BANISHMENT

In Harry Potter Firenze the centaur was banished from the centaur herd. He finds a second “home” at Hogwarts, but he can no longer live with the herd or communicate with any of the other centaurs.

In History banishment was a very real and serious punishment. It was used when people still lived in small tribes and villages, and it is still used today in certain close-knit communities, like the Amish. Originally banishment was a severe punishment, because it meant the person had to survive in the wilderness alone and without the protection of the community. Banishment could very well mean a death sentence. When a person was banished they not only had to physically leave the community, but they could have no further contact with their friends or family. They were basically considered dead. It does not work in modern times, because the banished person can usually live easily outside of the community. Emotionally it would still be hard to survive without contact with friends and family.

SIR CADOGAN

In Harry Potter he is one of the portraits at Hogwarts. He takes over as the Gryffindor portrait after the Fat Lady is attacked by Sirius Black, “...nobody was very happy about this. Sir Cadogan spent half his time challenging people to duels, and the rest thinking up ridiculously complicated passwords...” (POA, 167).

In History a cadogan is a kind of lidless pot named after William Cadogan, 1st Earl of Cadogan, who was said to be the first Englishman to own such a pot. A cadogan is filled from the bottom.

In Literature Sir Cadogan resembles the White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland: Through the Looking Glass*. Alice met the White Knight when walking through Wonderland.

"At this moment her [Alice] thoughts were interrupted by a loud shouting of 'Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!' and a Knight, dressed in crimson armor, came galloping down upon her, brandishing a great club. Just as he reached her, the horse stopped suddenly. 'You're my prisoner!' the Knight cried, as he tumbled off his horse" (AIW, 241-2).

The White Knight, "was dressed in tin armor, which seemed to fit him very badly, and he had a queer-shaped little deal box fastened across his shoulders, upside down, and with the lid hanging open." (244). This sounds like the real Sir Cadogan's lidless tea pot that is filled from the bottom.

The White Knight was clumsy and fell down a lot, "whenever the horse stopped (which it did very often) he fell off in front; and, whenever it went on again (which it generally did rather suddenly) he fell off behind." (AIW, 244).

Sounds like the Sir Cadogan in Harry Potter, challenging the kids and doing so while being clumsy and a bit ridiculous. Like the White Knight, Sir Cadogan fell off his horse too, "...a particularly wild swing made him overbalance, and he landed face-down in the grass" (POA, 100).

CARACTACUS (1st century, AD)

In Harry Potter Caractacus Burke is one of the owners of the store Borgin and Burkes located in Knockturn Alley.

In History Caractacus was a British chieftain who led the British Celts in a guerilla war against the Romans. In one battle the Romans captured his wife and family and eventually Caractacus himself was captured. He gave a speech that so impressed the Roman Emperor that the Emperor pardoned Caractacus and allowed him to live in Rome.

CAT, RAT, DOG

In Harry Potter this is a chapter in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. The cat is Crookshanks, the rat is Scabbers/Wormtail, and the dog is Sirius Black. It is the title of the chapter in which Harry, Ron, and Hermione follow Sirius into the Shrieking Shack and discover the truth about Sirius and Wormtail.

In History Cat, Rat, and Dog is most likely a reference to the English King Richard III and his favorites. In 1484 a two line note was pinned to the door of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. It read:

"the catte, the ratte and lovell our dogge rulyth all England under a hogge."

This little poem made fun of some of the most powerful men in the country. The cat (catte) was Sir William Catesby, the Speaker of the House of Commons in 1484 and a spy for King Richard III. The rat (ratte) was Sir Richard Ratcliffe, a knight of King Richard III and one of his favorites. The dog (dogge) was Francis Lovell, a childhood friend of Richard III. He was called the dog because he had a dog on his crest. The hog (hogge) was Richard III. He had a boar on his crest, thus earning him the nickname of hogge. When he came to power and became King,

Richard enriched Catesby, Ratcliffe, and Lovell; the cat, the rat, and the dog.

DRACO

In Harry Potter Draco Malfoy is Harry's worst enemy at Hogwarts.

In History Draco was a 7th century Greek lawgiver. Some historians believe that his was the first code of laws to be written down. It is said that they were written in blood rather than ink. His laws are noteworthy, not because they were the first, but because of their harshness. Death was the penalty for even minor crimes. Today, we say laws are "draconian," meaning they are harsh and severe, particularly too harsh for the crime committed.

DURMSTRANG

In Harry Potter this is the wizarding school from Europe. From the name of the school to Victor's accent, it would seem that the school is somewhere in Germany, even though the school's location is a secret.

In History this is a variation on the term "Sturm and Drang" which was a movement in German literature and music in the 18th century. The movement stressed emotion over rationality. The term means "Storm and Stress."

FAWKES

In Harry Potter Fawkes is Professor Dumbledore's phoenix.

In History Guy Fawkes (1570-1606) was one of the most famous traitors to the English crown. The Gunpowder Plot happened in 1605 with Guy Fawkes as one of the main instigators. The Gunpowder Plot was an assassination attempt against King James I of England, who was also King James VI of Scotland. The men involved in the Gunpowder Plot, including Guy Fawkes, were all Catholics upset about the lack of religious tolerance in England. Their plan: to blow up the Parliament building during the

opening of Parliament on November 5th, 1605. Guy Fawkes was in charge of the explosives. The plot was uncovered when a letter of one of the conspirators was found. Guy Fawkes was caught guarding the explosives under the Parliament building and arrested. A few days later he was tried, found guilty, and executed. There is a tradition in England to light bonfires on November 5th every year to celebrate the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot. Referred to as "Guy Fawkes Day," people create effigies of Guy Fawkes which they burn at the bonfires.

Harry Potter Connection! The first time Harry sees Fawkes the Phoenix is on "burning day," the day he burns up and turns to ash.

FILIBUSTER

In Harry Potter Dr. Filibuster's Fabulous Wet-Start No-Heat Fireworks. Harry uses one as a distraction in *The Chamber of Secrets* when he throws it into Goyle's cauldron in Potions class. The distraction allows Hermione to sneak into the Potions cabinet and steal ingredients for the Polyjuice Potion.

In History a filibuster is used by politicians to prevent a vote, and it's done by talking nonstop until the deadline for the vote has passed.

NICHOLAS FLAMEL (1330-1480)

In Harry Potter we never meet the actual Nicholas Flamel, but we do hear a lot about him. He is the creator of the Sorcerer's Stone and

rumored to be 665 years old. He is a good friend of Albus Dumbledore. Harry, Ron, and Hermione spend a great deal of time looking for information about him.

In History the real Nicholas Flamel was a bookseller who lived in Paris during the 14th and 15th centuries. He married Perenelle, an older woman to whom he was devoted his entire life. Nicholas Flamel received a book from which he learned the secret of the philosopher's stone. According to legend, an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him about the book. When a merchant arrived to sell him the book he recognized it as the one in his dream. The secret of the philosopher's stone resided in that book.

The legend has it that Flamel attained the secret within the book and was able to turn metal into gold and also to use that same transmutation to make himself immortal. Even though he was supposedly able to turn just about anything into gold, Flamel did not live as a rich man. He was very generous and helped the poor. He also continued to live as a bookseller and he wrote books about alchemy.

Nicholas Flamel "died" at the age of 80. Before he died, he had had his own tomb built. However, not long after he died men who had heard of his alchemical ability raided Flamel's tomb, house, and bookstore. They believed that there were great treasures of gold stashed in Flamel's house and tomb, but they found nothing and Flamel was forgotten.

In the 17th century a French archeologist went to the "east" and was told that Nicholas and Perenelle Flamel were still alive and had faked their deaths and lived in India. He never found them. Nicholas Flamel's body has never been discovered.

FOREST OF DEAN

In Harry Potter Hermione takes Harry and Ron to the Forest of Dean when they are on the run in *The Deathly Hallows*. There, Snape leaves

the Sword of Gryffindor in the pool of water for Harry to find and retrieve. Ron comes back to Harry and Hermione in the Forest of Dean.

In History the Forest of Dean was a royal forest. The word *dene* or *dean* is derived from the Old English word *denu*, which means valley. During the early middle-ages the forest was reserved for royal hunting, but since then it has been used for timber, charcoal, iron ore, and coal. J.K. Rowling grew up in a town near the Forest of Dean!

GAUNT

In Harry Potter the Gaunt family appears in *The Half Blood Prince*. They are the magical descendants of Salazar Slytherin and related to Lord Voldemort. His mother is Merope Gaunt and her father is Marvolo Gaunt. Marvolo wore the Gaunt family ring that Lord Voldemort turned into a Horcrux.

In History Gaunt is a famous English family name. During the 14th and 15th centuries two sides of the same English family fought for the English throne, a dispute known as the Wars of the Roses. On one side, the Lancasters—John *of Gaunt* was the Duke of Lancaster. On the other side—the York family. The two families fought back and forth with the kingship switching sides off and on throughout the 15th century. Eventually the battles stopped in 1485 when Henry Tudor (a distant Lancaster) defeated Richard III (a York) and became King Henry VII.

GREY LADY

In Harry Potter the Grey Lady was Helena Ravenclaw, the daughter of Ravenclaw House founder Rowena Ravenclaw, and the Ravenclaw ghost. She was killed by the Bloody Baron who killed her when she refused to return with him to her mother. He then killed himself and they both returned to Hogwarts castle as ghosts.

In History the Grey Lady is a ghost that appears in many different ghost legends. In Scotland there are a number of castles that have Grey Lady

ghosts. Brodick castle is haunted by a "grey lady." She had the plague and was locked away in the dungeon where she starved to death. Fyvie castle's "grey lady of Glamis" was burned at the stake after being accused of witchcraft. The English have their own Grey Lady legend. In one a young nun fell in love with a man and when discovered was punished and thrown into a room which was then bricked up. She died in the room which has become a part of a theatre. This "grey lady" still haunts the theatre.

HALLOWEEN

In Harry Potter Harry's parents were killed on Halloween. The Tri-Wizard Tournament Champions are announced on Halloween night.

In History Halloween as we know it is a time for wearing costumes, carving pumpkins, trick-or-treating, and eating candy. Our holiday comes from the ancient Celtic holiday of Samhain (pronounced "sow wan"). This holiday marked the end of the light, warm part of the year and the beginning of the dark, cold part of the year. October 31st was a time when the ancient Celts believed the veil between our world and the "otherworld" was thin. This meant that spirits both good and bad could come through the veil and interact in our world. People wore costumes and masks of bad spirits in order to protect themselves from them. They lit bonfires to provide light and protection from harmful spirits. This was also a time when they welcomed the spirits of their ancestors into their homes.

Harry Potter Connection! It seems fitting that Harry's parents would be killed by the evil Lord Voldemort on Halloween, the time when harmful spirits were thought to be loose in our world. We can see it symbolically as an evil spirit breaking through the veil into the world of good people from the "otherworld." In fact, when Voldemort approached the Potters' house to kill Harry on that Halloween night, a young boy saw him and thought he was someone out trick-or-treating. The boy soon discovered that Voldemort was much scarier than that, "*He [Voldemort] saw the small boy's smile falter as he ran near enough to see beneath the hood of the cloak, saw the fear cloud his painted face: Then the child turned and ran away...*" (DH, 343). Voldemort is as close as this young boy will come to seeing a creature from the Otherworld.

HENGIST (5th century AD)

In Harry Potter Hengis (note the slight spelling difference) is the founder of Hogsmeade village.

In History in the 5th century the English King Vortigern was having trouble keeping the Picts and other tribes from revolting against him. At this time an army of Saxons from Germany landed on English soil with their leaders *Hengist* and Horsa. Rather than fight with them King Vortigern made an alliance with them. He gave them the land of Kent, which is in the southeast part of England. Vortigern married Hengist's

daughter. Eventually, though, Vortigern and Hengist and Horsa could not share the same land and they went to war with each other. Horsa was killed and Hengist ruled Kent alone.

HIPPOCRATES (460 BC-370 BC)

In Harry Potter Hippocrates is the Healer-in-Charge at St. Mungo's Hospital when Harry visited Arthur Weasley in *The Order of the Phoenix*.

In History Hippocrates was a physician in ancient Athens who became known as the father of Western medicine. Hippocrates believed that illness was caused by physical factors such as the environment and diet, rather than the supernatural, which is what people believed at the time. Hippocrates also believed that physicians had to live up to a high moral standard. The "Hippocratic Oath" that doctors still take today was developed by Hippocrates for his students. It's an oath that the physician will act ethically while practicing medicine.

INQUISITOR/INQUISITION (12th century-19th century)

In Harry Potter the Inquisition is referenced when Professor Umbridge is named Hogwarts High Inquisitor, and when she later appoints Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle to be the Inquisitorial Squad. The "Inquisition" at Hogwarts is similar to the one in our real history.

In History the Inquisition was a Catholic Church institution established to discover and destroy heresy. Heresy is a belief that is different from the official doctrine of the Church. So, anyone who believed in something that didn't follow the Church's official doctrine could be brought before the Inquisitor and questioned. The process was sometimes very corrupt and people were brought to "trial" because if they were convicted of "heresy" they would lose their lands. The accused had to defend him or herself to the Inquisitor and did not have the option of seeing who their accuser was. The Inquisitor would sometimes hear testimony from very unreliable sources. By the 13th century most European countries had some Inquisitorial system in place. The Inquisition was worse in some

countries (Spain) than others (Scandinavia). In the places where the Inquisition was bad, torture was a common way to achieve "confessions" and to get people to deny their heresy. Punishments for heresy ranged from attending church more regularly to death by burning. Just like in the Harry Potter books, the Inquisition was unjustly imposed—some people were more likely to be brought before the Inquisition than others.

LABYRINTH

In Harry Potter the labyrinth, a maze of tall hedges, was used for the final task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament. Harry and the other champions have to find their way through the maze and get to the cup in the middle to win.

In History labyrinths were created for royalty on the grounds of their palaces. Gardeners would create elaborate mazes using tall hedges. It was a game for the nobility to try and find their way through the labyrinth.

L'ESTRANGE (1616-1704)

In Harry Potter Rudolphus Lestrange was a Death Eater and the husband of Bellatrix Lestrange. Imprisoned in Azkaban after Voldemort's first downfall, he escaped with the others in *The Order of the Phoenix*.

In History Roger L'Estrange was a writer, journalist, and pamphleteer (meaning he wrote small pamphlets that were distributed to masses of people). He was imprisoned for four years for political conspiracy. In 1685 he became a member of Parliament and was a fierce opponent of religious tolerance and freedom of the press. L'Estrange was particularly ruthless towards his enemies and he had many.

MUGWUMP

In Harry Potter Albus Dumbledore held the position of Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards.

In History mugwump was originally an Algonquian term meaning "war leader." In the early 19th century mugwump meant a bigwig or someone of a minor position who becomes self-important. It was a political term used for Republicans who supported the Democrats in the 1884 elections. It was also a term used for people who sat on the fence and couldn't decide on an issue—their "mug" was on one side and their "wump" on the other.

NEVILLE

In Harry Potter Neville Longbottom is one of Harry's friends but there is no need to explain who he is!

In History Neville is another famous and illustrious English family involved in the Wars of the Roses, like the Gaunts. Richard Neville, the Duke of Warwick, was called "the Kingmaker" because of his success in battle and politics. He helped Richard, Duke of York, capture King Henry VI and become the protector of the realm. When Richard was killed in battle, Neville helped York's son, Edward, defeat Henry VI and claim the Kingship as his own. Edward became King Edward IV. Edward's mother, Cecily, was also a Neville.

NURMENGARD

In Harry Potter Nurmengard is Grindelwald's prison for his opponents. Unfortunately for him, he ended up there too!

In History this sounds very much like Nuremberg which is a town in Germany. What makes Nuremberg famous is it held the famous Nazi trials that took place at the end of World War II. The Nuremberg trials were held in the Palace of Justice which also housed a prison. Many infamous Nazi's were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death at Nuremberg.

QUIDDITCH

In Harry Potter Quidditch is the wizarding world's most popular sport.

In History there is no real world equivalent to Quidditch. However, we have some games that are similar in design such as soccer, hockey, lacrosse, polo, and basketball. All involve two teams attempting to score through some kind of goal using a ball of some sort. Certain players protect the goals, others move the ball, while others attempt to take the ball away. In its roughness Quidditch is more similar to rugby or the ancient games of shinty (Scotland) or hurling (Ireland). Shinty and hurling could be very violent games!

Quidditch and Jousting

There is one other "sport" that Quidditch resembles and it does so only because it is so dangerous and people sometimes died. In the Middle Ages knights used to take part in jousting tournaments. Some knights did this to hone their skills for battle and some did it to make a living. The early medieval jousting tournaments were *very* dangerous. The knights would joust and if one of them became unseated from his horse, they would then fight on the ground with swords. When a knight was bested he had to give up and the winning knight gained a ransom. The *melee* was the most dangerous of all the jousting games. It was basically a controlled battle—teams of knights would fight and try to unhorse each other to gain ransom. Often the fighting would get vicious and violent and men were seriously injured and even killed. Geoffrey, the son of King Henry II of England, was killed in a jousting tournament—trampled by a horse. Unfortunately for these medieval knights, they had no magical Madame Sprout to heal their injuries!

PARACELSUS (1493-1541)

In Harry Potter he is a famous wizard on a Chocolate Frog trading card.

In History Paracelsus was a physician, alchemist, astrologer and occultist living in the late 15th, early 16th century. He traveled all over the world

and brought some new ideas back to Europe. He was famous for introducing different minerals and metals into medicine. Paracelsus wanted to use alchemy in order to discover ways to use the properties of metals in healing. He also used astrology in his medicine, implementing talismans for healing. He and his work were controversial.

PTOLEMY (90-165 bc)

In Harry Potter he is a famous wizard on a Chocolate Frog trading card.

In History Claudius Ptolemaeus, or Ptolemy (tol-eh-mee), was a Greek intellectual, mathematician, astrologer, and astronomer, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. He wrote several scientific books, including the *Tetrabiblos* which was a treatise on astrology. He attempted to create a book in which astrology was treated as a scientific study. Ptolemy used the horoscope system to predict events in people's lives. This book was used by astrologers for centuries.

SAINT BATHILD (7th century)

In Harry Potter Bathilda Bagshot was the author of *A History of Magic*. She lived in Godric's Hollow and knew the Dumbledores and the Potters. Bathilda was killed and possessed by Nagini in *The Deathly Hallows*.

In History Saint Bathild was born in England and then kidnapped and sold into slavery in France. She became a part of the household of King Clovis II and later became Clovis's wife and Queen. She gave birth to three sons all of who went on to become kings. When Clovis died, she became regent and forbade the selling of Christians into slavery. She spent the last years of her life in a convent devoted to prayer and caring for the sick.

SAINT GEORGE (ca. 275/281-303)

In Harry Potter Saint George is not a character in the books but is referred to when George Weasley loses his ear in *The Deathly Hallows*. When Fred asks how he feels, George replies, "*Saintlike...you see...I'm holy. Holey, Fred, geddit?*" (DH, 74).

In History Saint George is the patron saint of England. He was a soldier of noble birth who served in the Roman army and he was beheaded for being a Christian in the Roman Emperor Diocletian's army. George stood up for Christians, resisted attempts to convert him away from his faith even under torture, and for that he was venerated by Christians of the time and then down through the middle ages. King Richard I took protection under George when he went on Crusade. George was officially made a saint in 1222 and became the patron saint of England sometime in the 14th century. The banner of Saint George, a red cross on a white background, became the uniform for English soldiers in the 12th or 13th centuries.

People in England still celebrate Saint George's Day on April 23.

The most famous St. George story is of him slaying a dragon to protect a village:

The Story of St. George and the Dragon

St. George was a soldier living and traveling in what is now the middle-east. In his travels he came across a town plagued by a dragon. The dragon lived in a swamp where the townspeople had to get their water and he demanded a sacrifice from the people in order for them to get the water. At first he demanded sheep, but eventually he ate all the sheep. Then he demanded the sacrifice of people. The villagers used a lottery system to determine who should be sacrificed. The day St. George came by, the daughter of the King had been picked as a sacrifice to the dragon.

When the dragon came to devour the princess St. George saved her. He made the sign of the cross to protect himself and then wounded the dragon with his lance. He then had the princess use her girdle (a belt women wore around their waists) to tie up the dragon. They led the dragon back to the village and St. George told the villagers he would kill the dragon if they converted to Christianity (they were pagan at the time). They did so and St. George killed the dragon with his lance.

SAINT HEDWIG (1174-1243)

In Harry Potter Hedwig is Harry's snowy white owl.

In History Saint Hedwig was the daughter of a Duke who lived in Bavaria in the 12th century. Interestingly enough, she married a man named Henry (Harry is a nickname for Henry). Upon his death Henry founded a convent for Hedwig where she lived until she died. She was very pious and was eventually canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church.

SAINT MUNGO (6th century)

In Harry Potter Saint Mungo's is the name of the wizard hospital.

In History St. Mungo, also known as Saint Kentigern, is the patron saint of Glasgow, Scotland.

SAINT WULFRIC (12th century)

In Harry Potter Wulfric is one of Professor Dumbledore's middle names.

In History Saint Wulfric started his life as a very materialistic and worldly priest. Then he met a beggar and had a religious conversion. After that he became a hermit and was well known for his miracles and prophecies. He was a popular saint during the middle ages and pilgrims visited his tomb regularly.

ANTONIO DE OLIVEIRA SALAZAR (1889-1970)

In Harry Potter Salazar Slytherin was one of the four founders of Hogwarts and the founder of Slytherin house.

In History Salazar was the Prime Minister of Portugal and a terrible dictator. He was considered a champion of "traditional" values, but these values were basically his own Catholic beliefs. He used a secret police force to keep control of the country, to take away people's civil liberties, and repress political freedom.

Harry Potter Connection! Like the historical Salazar, Salazar Slytherin believed only his views were the right ones. He only wanted pure bloods to be allowed into Hogwarts.

LUCIUS SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS (AD 145-AD 211)

In Harry Potter there is *Lucius Malfoy* and *Severus Snape*, both Death Eaters at one time. Both nasty characters who hate Harry.

In History Lucius Severus was a Roman Emperor from 193-211 known for his cruelty, vindictiveness, and ruthlessness. He became Emperor by force, treachery, and betrayal. One of the people he betrayed was *Clodius Albinus* (Albus is Dumbledore's first name). Albinus also had a claim to be Emperor, and Severus promised that he would be Emperor after him. However, Severus eventually marched against Albinus and defeated him in battle. Severus showed his cruelty by mauling Albinus's dead body and also by killing Albinus's wife and sons. When he went back to the Roman Senate, Severus killed all of Albinus's supporters. Although cruel to his enemies, Severus was generous to his supporters and his troops.

Harry Potter Connection! Like the historical Severus, Severus Snape is cruel to Harry, Hermione, and Neville while being generous to Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle. His “supporters” (the students in his house) are treated well while others are treated with cruelty, and in the case of Harry, vindictiveness.

SIR JONATHAN TRELAWNEY (1650-1721)

In Harry Potter Sybil Trelawney is the Divination teacher at Hogwarts.

In History Sir Jonathan Trelawney was the Bishop of Winchester. When King James II issued his Declaration of Indulgence, giving religious tolerance to Catholics, Trelawney and some other Bishops petitioned against it. They were imprisoned in the Tower of London for three weeks.

CASSANDRA VABLATSKY

In Harry Potter Cassandra Vablatsky is Professor Trelawney's grandmother and a seer.

In History there is a real seer named Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891). Helena Blavatsky was a psychic and claimed to be able to perform other magic such as levitation, clairvoyance, and out-of-body projection. She was the founder of Theosophy which was the belief that all religions have some basis of truth in them that will lead people to evolve spiritually.

WIZENGAMOT

In Harry Potter the Wizengamot is the highest court in the wizard court of law. Albus Dumbledore was the Chief Warlock at one time.

In History there is no "wizengamot" but there is a "Witenagemot." The Witenagamot or Witan was a council of important and powerful men who assembled and advised the King. It played an important role in Anglo-Saxon England during the 7th century and it lasted until the 11th century. Although the Witan had no official political power, the King usually took their advice. In fact, it would have been a foolish king to not listen to his Witan.

YULE

In Harry Potter Hogwarts holds a Yule Ball in *The Goblet of Fire*.

In History Yule is a winter festival that goes back to pre-Christian times. It was a Northern European and Scandinavian holiday celebrated at the Winter Solstice. Some traditions include burning a yule log and eating the yule goat or yule boar. There was feasting, drinking, and toasts made to the gods during Yule. In Scandinavian countries they still say, "God Yul" instead of "Merry Christmas."

The Medieval World of Harry Potter

Much about the Harry Potter world is reminiscent of our own medieval past. Here's how:

- The Hogwarts students and staff live in a castle.
- The students write on parchment with ink quills.
- The castle is heated with fires.
- Hogwarts is staffed by servants (House Elves) who cook, clean, and even stoke the fires.

- People communicate by sending hand-written message by messenger (owls). There are no telephones.
- The castle is lit by candles. There appears to be no electricity in Hogwarts or in any other wizard dwelling.
- The students at Howarts are brought to the castle in carriages, except the first years who are taken by boat.
- Wizards and witches wear robes and capes.
- Hagrid's hut looks very much like a medieval peasant's cottage.
- People cooked in cauldrons over open fires.

Try It Out! Can you think of any other ways the Harry Potter world is like the Middle Ages?
