

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Book 6)

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Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Book 6)
by J. K. Rowling (Author), Mary GrandPré (Illustrator)

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Grade 5 Up—Opening just a few weeks after the previous book left off, the penultimate entry in the series is, as the author foretold, the darkest and most unsettling yet. The deeds of Voldemort's Death Eaters are spreading even to the Muggle world, which is enshrouded in a mist caused by Dementors draining hope and happiness. Harry, turning 16, leaves for Hogwarts with the promise of private lessons with Dumbledore. No longer a fearful boy living under the stairs, he is clearly a leader and increasingly isolated as rumors spread that he is the Chosen One, the only individual capable of defeating Voldemort. Two attempts on students' lives, Harry's conviction that Draco Malfoy has become a Death Eater, and Snape's usual slimy behavior add to the increasing tension. Yet through it all, Harry and his friends are typical teens, sharing homework and messy rooms, rushing to classes and sports practices, and flirting. Ron and Hermione realize their attraction, as do Harry and Ginny. Dozens of plot strands are pulled together as the author positions Harry for the final book. Much information is cleverly conveyed through Dumbledore's use of a Pensieve, a device that allows bottled memories to be shared by Harry and his beloved professor as they apparate to various locations that help explain Voldemort's past. The ending is heart wrenching. Once again, Rowling capably blends literature, mythology, folklore, and religion into a delectable stew. This sixth book may be darker and more difficult, but Potter fans will devour it and begin the long and bittersweet wait for the final installment.—Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME

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