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What Happens in Adaptation? The Fate of Literary Texts

Key Stage 4 English Literature
Resource 6

2019



Resource Six Overview



Topic	The Afterlife of Adaptation
GCSE Modules	Modern Texts
Objectives	<p>By the end of this resource, you will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Engaged with the economy of adaptation and how this is supported through media convergence.✓ Considered the relationship between media and literature and how literary sources are utilised in modern popular culture and through different media forms and relations.✓ Built critical and evaluative skills. It tests wider comprehensive skills and interpretations while also encouraging creative and independent thinking, which is to be effectively communicated through clear and coherent writing.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the data source2. Complete the activities3. Explore the further reading
Context	<p>The data source is an article published on The Guardian website on November 15th, 2018. It is written by journalist Pauline Block in response to the new film <i>Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald</i> (2018).</p> <p><i>The Crimes of Grindelwald</i> is the second film in the <i>Fantastic Beasts</i> franchise and is linked to the <i>Harry Potter</i> universe created by J.K. Rowling. The films centre around Newt Scamander (played by Eddie Redmayne), who was merely referenced as the author of one of <i>Harry's</i> schoolbooks, entitled <i>Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them</i>.</p> <p>It is therefore a film spin-off from the original books as well as a prequel, as it is set in the 1920s, where it explores characters and events that came before the events in <i>Harry Potter</i>. There are reportedly five films planned in total for the <i>Fantastic Beasts</i> series.</p>

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Data Source



'Thanks, JK Rowling, but I've had it with Harry Potter'

Hogwarts formed the backdrop to my childhood – but, as *The Crimes of Grindelwald* is released, it's time to say goodbye.

Would JK Rowling please leave Harry Potter in peace? Back in 2010 was a good time to move on. Harry Potter's last adventures had hit the bookstores in 2007, and three years later the Warner Bros adaptations had just about run their course in cinemas too. For many millennials, the young wizard had worked his magic through most of their childhood.

But it's 2018 now, and a new Harry Potter extended universe film, *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, is out this week. The Harry Potter series, it would seem, truly "opened at the close". By Dumbledore, I wish it hadn't.

I love Harry Potter and I always will. It's all there in my Pensieve: the first delight at reading "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much"; the wizarding treasure hunt thrown by my parents for my ninth birthday, with my dad dressed as Hagrid in the garden shed; the Beauxbatons parchment letter, written in green ink, sent by my older cousin during my 11th summer; deciphering my copy of *Deathly Hallows*, the first book I read in English, and having to check the French for "wand"; the 2001 trip to the cinema to see *Philosopher's Stone*, and all the ones that followed.

But, in 2010, just as I caught up with Harry's age of 17, I thought it was finally over.

Someone needs to call a halt to the excessive afterlife of Potter's fictional universe. It was vast enough in the (seven) books and (eight) films – we didn't and don't need a community website, a theatre play, the printed script of said play, a new movie, the printed script of said movie, and even more movies.

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Data Source



I remember Rowling being interviewed, back when she was still writing the books. She talked about the silliest HP marketing ideas that were continually being run by her. On one occasion she was obliged to veto a toilet flush system that sounded like Moaning Myrtle. In my eyes, the *Cursed Child* play and the *Fantastic Beasts* films should have had the same treatment: they are inherently unnecessary and, frankly, just a little bit insulting.

My mistake was engaging with them. I didn't see the play – the script was enough. It mixed the worst elements of bad fanfiction (trying to prolong a hero's story by moving on to the children; time travel; the utter lack of respect for a fallen character's arc; and – surprise! – the villain has had children too), with zero inspiration. The first *Fantastic Beasts* film wasn't a catastrophe, but it was completely missable even before the series became a magnet for terrible editorial choices, such as giving Voldemort's snake a very problematic back story. At this point, the whole thing feels like a Cruciatus curse (often used on Muggles): it's all very painful, and I wish it would stop.

The saddest thing is that Rowling has been complicit in all this. She helped with the writing of *Cursed Child* and penned the scripts of the *Fantastic Beasts* series. She regularly "reveals" new details about Potter's magical world on Twitter.

Rowling's talent is immense: she has created a 21st-century modern literary classic. As I grew up, I looked up to her as the textbook classy writer: respectfully engaging with readers, successful but wise enough to retreat.

She spoke only when a new book came out, or about causes she held dear. She spoke openly of her struggles living on benefits while writing the first books, and about her early

Resource Six Data Source



work for Amnesty International. In 2011 alone, she donated 16% of her net worth to charities (about £120m). Of all contemporary authors who hit gold, Rowling remains one of the very most inspirational.

Yet, a few days ago, I gave up: I unfollowed Rowling on Twitter. Every Potterhead has a question they would like Rowling to answer (mine is whether Platform 9 ¾ is linked to the legend that the Celtic queen Boudicca is buried under King's Cross platforms 9 and 10) and she is kind enough to often take time to read and tweet back. Harry's world changed her life – I can only imagine how great a task it must be to truly close this chapter.

It's easier for me, and my choice is made. I won't follow the next tweet revelations, and I don't want to see the new film. Thank you, Joanne Kathleen Rowling. My Pensieve is full of cherished stories – I don't need any more.

Figure 1 (left)

2018 Film Poster – Jude Law as young Dumbledore and Eddie Redmayne as Newt Scamander



Figure 2 (right)

J.K. Rowling with the first Harry Potter book in 1997

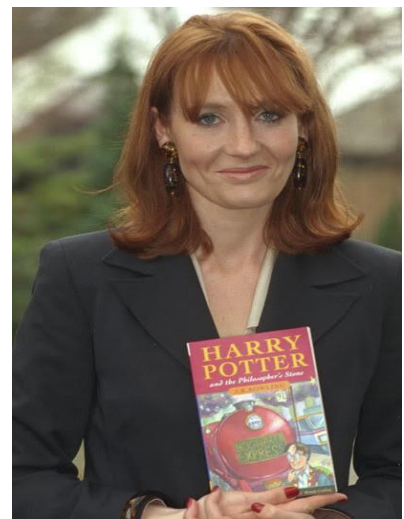


Figure 3 (bottom)

Selection of official Fantastic Beast Merchandise



Resource Six Activities



Activities

1. Briefly summarise and explain the view and opinion of the article writer.
 - ✓ Consider also, the use of terminology that you think someone who is unfamiliar with Harry Potter would have difficulties with and the effect this might have on their understanding of the article.
2. Discuss: How would you describe the advantages and disadvantage of continuing and extending the original novel through different forms of adaptation?
 - ✓ Consider negative and positive effects for the author, the book reader and the film viewer.
3. Thinking more widely: In what ways do we engage with different forms of adaptation today?
 - ✓ Consider, for example, how this is made possible through our use of media. Include other examples where you encounter a book, a film, or a character across multiple media platforms.



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Further Reading



Explore



1. Diane Patterson, *Harry Potter's World Wide Influence* (2009)
2. Susan Gunelius, *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon* (2008)
3. Cassie Brummitt, 'Pottermore: Transmedia Storytelling and Authorship in Harry Potter' (2016)
4. Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry* (2012)
5. Roberta Pearson and Anthony Smith, eds. *Storytelling in the Media Convergence Age: Exploring Screen Narratives* (2014)



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100 Black Prince Road
London, SE1 7SJ



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