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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Harry Potter—Good for Reading¹

*Donna Davis*²

When you think of celebrities that are household names, you're not likely to think of a fictional character—yet the young Harry Potter has certainly earned that distinction. And while the Harry Potter books and movies have catapulted to record-breaking success, even amid controversy, these books have also had another extraordinary effect on our youth. Harry Potter has stimulated an interest in reading among older children.

In a recent study conducted by the research firm Yankelovich and Scholastic educational publishers, children and their parents credited the Harry Potter series with getting more young people to read for fun and with helping them do better in school. Just more than half of the children between the ages of 5 and 17 claimed that they didn't read books for fun before reading Harry Potter, and 65% reported they have been doing better in school since they started reading the Potter books. Their parents were a little more enthusiastic, with 89% reporting their children showing an improved attitude toward reading, and 76% believing their children are doing better in school since starting to read the Potter books (Scholastic/Yankelovitch, 2006).

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In the Kids and Family Reading Report, the researchers found that older children claimed that they don't read for fun because they can't find books that interest them. However, the Harry Potter books have garnered interest among all ages and have given many families books to enjoy together, and in the process have improved attitudes toward reading.

Perhaps the magic of Harry Potter was equally powerful outside of the story, as the study shows that parents who want their children and teens to read may have found a spellbinding solution.

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