

# Short Paper 1.1: Why Harry Potter?

engl 111 / sec. G / winter quarter 2011-12 / chang



The simplest place to begin any investigation, any line of inquiry, any exploration is to start with the first person that it must matter to—namely you.

Personal experience, personal opinion, and personal interest can be important “common places” to generate questions, ideas, and arguments. Granted that most academic writing, particularly those that presuppose objectivity and fact-making, must depend on more than the personal and require complex claims, careful framing and reasoning, evidence, and analysis. However, that does not mean that the two registers – the personal and the academic – cannot complement or supplement each other in productive, persuasive ways.

To start this critical sequence, you are asked to draw on your own experiences as a reader, a writer, and a curious subject of the world. Think about the following questions (but do not feel obligated to answer them all like a laundry list:

- Why do you/did you read *Harry Potter*?
- What do you get out of *Harry Potter*? Why is it important to you?
- If you have never read *Harry Potter*, why didn’t you read it? Why start now?
- Who introduced you to *Harry Potter*? Who have you encouraged to read *Harry Potter*? Why?
- Why take a college class on *Harry Potter*?

Using these questions as inspiration, write a **3-page autobiography** of yourself relating a particular experience with the *Harry Potter* series. Use this experience as a way to articulate something crucial, intellectual, or profound about your relationship to the novels (and films). Think of this as a personal essay, a piece that might appear in a school yearbook or school newsletter.

Remember that this is an autobiography, a personal profile, which means you are telling your audience and me **something memorable about yourself**. This autobiography also asks you to use *Harry Potter* to reveal something about **who you are, what you do, and what is important to you**. In other words, it still needs to have a **point**. Keep in mind that you only have three pages, less than a thousand words, to convey something of yourself. Use the experience as a way to **focus** your autobiography. Also keep in mind that this is an assignment, albeit less formal, and will still require general paper conventions.

**Targeted outcomes:** 1, 3

**Turn in:** 34 inches, typed, no title page, proper heading, double-spaced, stapled

**Due:** Monday, April 7