

The Magical World of Harry Potter

Purpose of Exhibit: This 8-frame Thematic Division exhibit explores the modern literary world of young witches and wizards created by J. K. Rowling.

Subject Matter: This exhibit shows many plants, animals, mythical beasts and monsters, geographical locations and astronomical names used by the author that young readers might not know or understand, especially since some are exclusively British or European. It examines the literary roots in traditional fantasy that influenced Ms Rowling. Although classified by some as children's literature, the quality and complexity of the writing should move the books into the fantasy genre; this exhibit supports that contention. Unless identified otherwise, actions and items mentioned in the books take precedence over the movies. Material from the recently release screen play and prequel movie have NOT been included.

Treatment and Plan: The exhibit is divided into eight major sections; the first seven cover characters, activities, items, actions, creatures, locations and methods of communication and transportation in the modern magical world. The eighth section divides into seven sub-sections, one for each book in the series. Each sub-section examines school studies and plot points. The exhibit balances topical and thematic interests. I choose this organizational plan because this exhibit is "a story about the story," and not limited to just the plot line. This format makes it easier for the viewer to comprehend the richness of Ms Rowling's writing style. I also want the exhibit to appeal to both stamp collectors and fantasy readers.

Knowledge of Subject: I have read science fiction and fantasy for over 50 years and the Harry Potter series since 2003. Please remember that the basis for this topic is still rather new. Ms Rowling started writing Harry Potter novels in 1990; the first book was published in Great Britain in June 1997. I have studied the seven books and eight movies in the series. I visited the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando and a traveling exhibit of the movie props.

Elements: In addition to commemorative, semi-postal and airmail stamps, the exhibit also has: black proofs, deluxe color proofs, progressive color proofs, booklet stamps and covers, coil stamps and line pairs, plate blocks, color registration plate marks, triptych strips, self-stick issues, geometric shapes (triangles and diamonds), miniature sheets, souvenir sheets, legally sanctioned customized sheets, official stamps, gutter pairs, letter exchange fee stamp, revenue stamps, frames, tabbed stamps, specimens, overprints, imperforate miniature sheet, first day covers, imprinted envelopes, postal cards, letter cards, maximum cards, metered mail, plus, pictorial and slogan cancels. There are six bogus issues all depicting the main protagonist (shown in 8.7.2) where six characters drink a potion and turn into imitation Harry Potters. Other elements are cited in the next section (Rarity).

Rarity: The difficulty of acquisition is not high for many items shown, but is more related to finding elements that best develop the story line. The exhibit contains all three known Harry Potter rarities; the French proof, the constant plate error and the Republic of China Harry Potter specimen sheets. There are other rare items in the exhibit, most notably a Monaco blue die proof, a Tonga imperforate plate proof, and a limited edition Australian sheetlet.

Research: I have tried to fill the postal rate "doughnut hole" that exists for exhibits of relatively modern material. It might be hard to obtain material for postal history exhibits, but the rate information usually has been collected and published. Modern material might be easier to find, but rate information (changes since the Wawrukiewicz-Beecher postal rate book and prior to information posted on the internet) can be difficult to find and verify.

Showings: This exhibit has won more than 15 gold medals at World Series of Philately shows. Since the 7th edition rules came out, it has earned 3 Golds and 7 Large Golds at WSP-level shows. It won the Reserve Grand at Milcopex in 2018. It has been in the Court of Honor for the Most Popular Champion of Champions contest at APS AmeriStamp six times.

References: (American editions cited)

Siegling, Van, 2011, *The Postal Potter, A Muggle Study of the Modern Wizarding World using Postage Stamps* (Copy available at APRL. Shows the exhibit as of September 2011.)

Rowling, J.K., The seven books and eight movies in the Harry Potter series.

Silvester, William, *Collecting Harry Potter on Stamps*, The Circuit (The Official Journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors, July/August 2011—Volume 29, No. 5)

There are many interviews with Ms. Rowling that have been transcribed and posted on the Internet. ~~They include information on ideas and inspiration for names and plot ideas.~~

Quick Research Sources: If you are not familiar with the Harry Potter series, ask your children (or grandchildren) for help. There are many websites dedicated to various aspects of the series; I actually recommend Wikipedia since it has been peer reviewed by thousands, if not millions, of fans. BEWARE! With the exception of release notices, I have found only one article in the philatelic press (the William Silvester article cited in the reference section) about Harry Potter to be without major errors.

The movies generate the proper feel and atmosphere but differ from the books, primarily by rearranging or cutting out secondary plot lines and characters. The eighth movie in particular took great liberties with the plotline.

Notes: The Belgium “labels” are actually duostamps, Scott # 2011. Iceland #C3 shows a gyrfalcon, not a griffin. Griffins do not have an active role in any of the books or movies. (Powdered griffin claw is cited as a potion ingredient; a variant spelling of “griffin” is part of the name of Harry’s house at Hogwarts, Gryffindor.) ~~I use the Mexican national symbol of an eagle attacking in snake to represent the flying phoenix attacking the snakelike basilisk.~~

As previously mentioned, I visited the Wizarding World of Harry Potter amusement park at Universal Orlando in February, 2011. I found Harry Potter post cards and 44 cent customized stamps, but no envelopes or 29 cent stamps. I decided the combination was too contrived for my exhibit.

Community Outreach: Besides trying to gain acceptance for Harry Potter, science fiction and fantasy within the philatelic community, this exhibit also reaches out to readers and movie viewers to become interested in stamp collecting. It has been on non-competitive display at a movie theater for the opening of two Harry Potter movies, the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Ft. Wayne Public Library, the Westerville Public Library, the 2010 World Fantasy Convention, twice at Marcon (a major regional science fiction and fantasy convention held each year in Columbus, Ohio) and presented at a middle school stamp club. It was on display at the Cardinal Spellman Museum Library for three weeks (starting mid-September, 2011), including Banned Book Week. It was the Court of Honor exhibit at the ASDA Fall show in New York City. I believe this organizational structure will appeal to people who have been exposed to the world of Harry Potter whether or not they are stamp collectors or exhibitors.

Recent changes: This is my first (and only) competitive exhibit (although others should follow shortly). It was completely **remounted and improved** for Chicagopex 2018. Additional philatelic research was added, and **owls** were added to show research and/or work on beyond normal expectations. Words within the story line were put in bold text to make it easier to determine why something is in the exhibit.

Goals: I would like to earn the new AAPE Sapphire Award; I believe I have already exhibited at 10 WSP shows since the start time for that award.