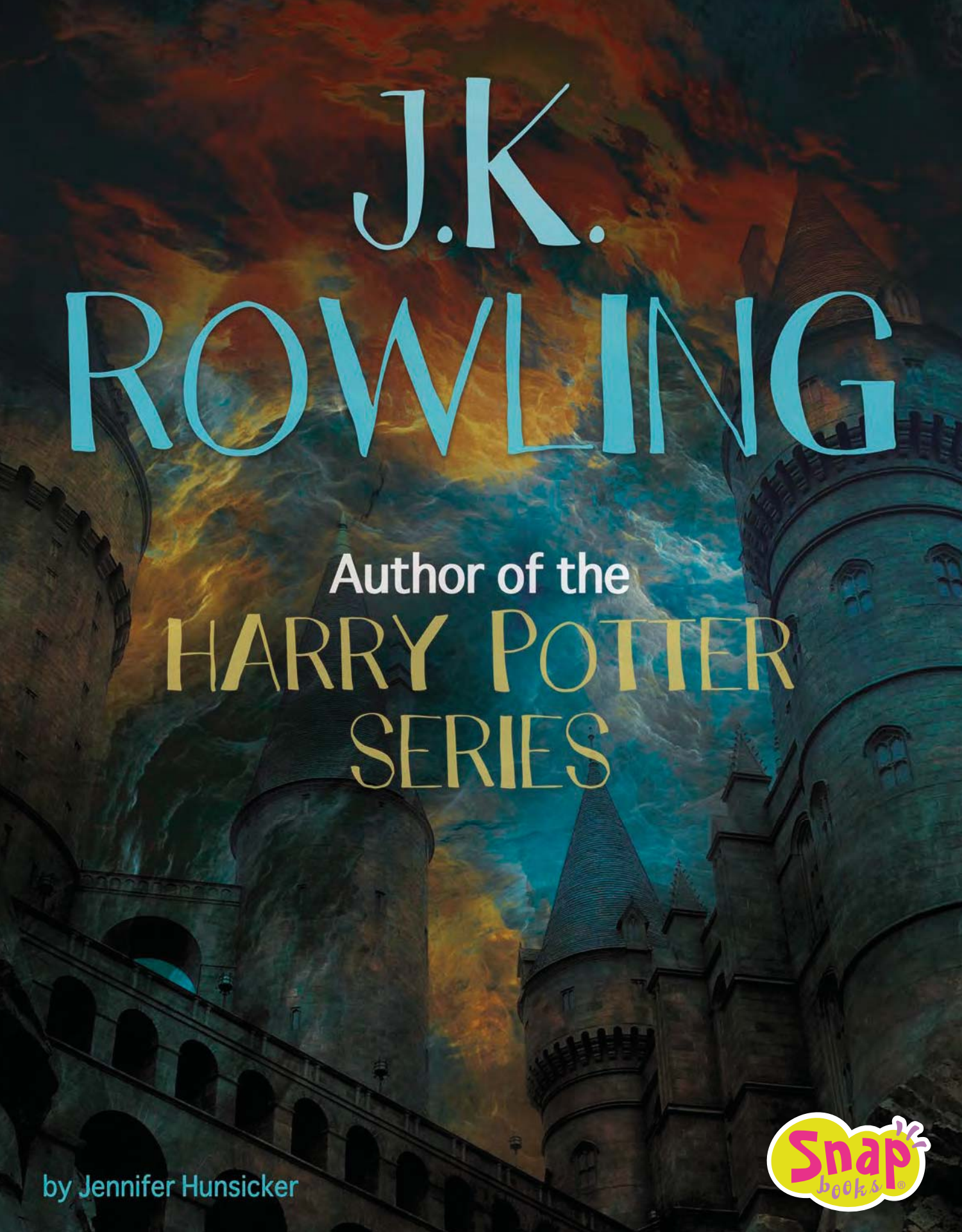




J.K. ROWLING

Author of the
HARRY POTTER
SERIES

by Jennifer Hunsicker



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Harry Potter Fever

The police held back a screaming mob. Some people were even crying. Camera lights flashed. A line of people snaked through the streets. They were attempting to get onto Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ at King's Cross Station in London. Fans and members of the press boarded a steam train disguised as Hogwart's Express. Author J.K. Rowling waved out the window to the hundreds who couldn't get on. Steam rose from the red train as it chugged away.

A WORLD OF WIZARDRY

It was July 8, 2000. J.K. Rowling's **publisher** was promoting the release of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. This book was the fourth in the blockbuster Harry Potter series.

The frenzy around Harry Potter's world had grown since the first book's release in 1997. Fans wanted to know more. What would happen to Harry, Hermione, and Ron? How would the **series**—that would take 17 years of Jo Rowling's life to write—end? How did this wizard world even begin? It started with imagination. It grew from a writer's life full of challenges.



publisher—a company that makes and sells printed things, such as newspapers or books

series—a number of things coming one after another



*Jo Rowling on
the train at
King's Cross
Station in 2000*

Meet Jo

Joanne Rowling was born July 31, 1965, in Yate, England. In keeping with family tradition, Jo, as she became known, did not have a middle name. Almost two years later, Joanne's younger sister, Di, was born.

Anne and Pete, Jo's parents, filled their home with love, books, and music. They played their favorite Beatles records and danced around the living room. Anne played the guitar. Both parents encouraged reading. Anne kept shelves full of books for herself and her children. She frequently read to her daughters.



Jo Rowling

CHILDHOOD CHEER AND CHALLENGE

Young Jo was a dreamer. She wrote her first story, "Rabbit," at age 6. She made up stories and games with wizards, witches, and all kinds of forest folk. She, her sister, and the neighborhood children brought Jo's stories to life. They acted them out in the nearby woods.

When Jo was 15, doctors diagnosed her mother with multiple sclerosis (MS). This was not an easy time for the Rowling family, but life went on. Jo attended high school. She became interested in global **social justice** issues. She was very concerned about the evils and inequality that other people endured throughout the world.



social justice—equality and fairness for all people in a society

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

MS is a crippling disease. It causes weakness and a loss of feeling in the limbs. Vision loss can also occur. Anne was not able to do the things she once loved, including playing the guitar. As the disease progressed, she needed extra help for things most people can do with ease, such as walking.

College and Work

Beginning in 1983 Jo attended Exeter University in England. Interested in a future as a writer, Jo wanted to study English literature. Her parents, however, encouraged her to study modern languages. They thought modern languages would help her find a good job after graduating.

Jo compromised. She studied both French and the Classics. Studying French pleased her parents. Classics let her study the **mythology** she loved. It also fed her desire to become a writer.

ALWAYS A STORYTELLER

Jo frequently went out with her friends for fun. She studied enough to get by as an average student. She remained a storyteller in everything she did. When her friends talked about their problems, Jo turned the tales of woe into spy stories. Her friends found this entertaining.



mythology—the study of stories or beliefs of untrue beings, such as gods or heroes, of a particular people

“ I was striking an uneasy balance between the ambition I had for myself, and what those closest to me expected of me.

—Jo Rowling, Harvard University Commencement Speech, June 5, 2008 ”

 **Exeter University**

