

Discussion Questions for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* by J.K. Rowling

(Some questions adapted from www.scholastic.com and www.hp-lexicon.org)

1. Is Scrimgeour a better leader than Fudge?
2. Why is Snape willing to make the unbreakable vow?
3. Any comments on Kreacher's role in this book? Dobby's?
4. When Harry asks about Percy and Ron says he is still on the outs with the family, Hermione says "Dumbledore says people find it far easier to forgive others for being wrong than being right." "Sounds like the sort of mental thing Dumbledore would say," Ron responds. Comments? Is Dumbledore right?
5. On the way to Hogwarts, Harry sneaks into Malfoy's compartment and gets caught by Malfoy. What does this behavior at this point in his development say about Harry?
6. One of the most heart wrenching moments of the book is when Luna asks Harry whether there will be more DA meetings and he says no. "I enjoyed the meetings," she says. "It was like having friends." When Harry accidentally invites Luna to go to Slughorn's Christmas party with him, "just as friends," she says, "I'd love to go with you as friends! Nobody's ever asked me to a party before, as a friend!"

Why do you think Rowling created the character of Luna? What does she add to the series?

7. A favorite part is when Hagrid seems mad at the three, but it's really because Aragog is ill:
After that, the atmosphere lightened considerably, for although neither Harry nor Ron had shown any inclination to go and feed giant grubs to a murderous, gargantuan spider, Hagrid seemed to take it for granted that they would have liked to have done and became his usual self once more. Later on, Ron says, "You didn't meet him, Hermione. Believe me, being dead will have improved him a lot."

Do you have any favorite parts that you would like to share?

8. The theme of Harry as "Dumbledore's man" is getting stronger. Harry tells Dumbledore about his encounter with Scrimgeour at Christmas. Harry says, "He accused me of being 'Dumbledore's man through and through.'" "How very rude of him," Dumbledore replies. "I told him I was," Harry says.

Dumbledore opened his mouth to speak and then closed it again. Behind Harry, Fawkes the phoenix let out a low, soft, musical cry. To Harry's intense embarrassment, he suddenly realized that Dumbledore's bright blue eyes looked rather watery, and stared hastily at his own knees. When Dumbledore spoke, however, his voice was quite steady. "I am very touched, Harry."

What is the significance of being Dumbledore's man?

9. Is the ongoing drama with Ron, Lavender and Hermione true to life?

10. Harry's experience with Felix Felicis is an entertaining one, but also important to the plot. What do you think about Harry's adventures that evening? Does Slughorn's behavior change your opinion of him?
11. When Harry is getting his invisibility cloak to join Dumbledore to go after the horcrux, he gives his friends the rest of the lucky potion. What does this say about Harry?

Harry says, "I'll be fine, I'll be with Dumbledore." Later on, after Dumbledore has drunk the potion and Harry is trying to get him back to Hogsmeade, Dumbledore says, "I am not worried, Harry. I am with you." Any comments on this?

12. Dumbledore has known for some time that Draco has been trying (albeit halfheartedly) to kill him. He has not acted, even though this has put him at risk, out of a desire to protect Draco. Even when his life is threatened he seems as much concerned to save Draco from becoming a killer as to save his own life. He sees Draco as someone who is redeemable.

Malfoy says, "You're at my mercy...." Dumbledore replies, "No, Draco, it is my mercy, and not yours, that matters now."

Is Dumbledore right in this attitude toward Draco, especially as his failure to act against Draco puts many other people at risk? What does the exchange about mercy imply to you?

13. Dumbledore death scene:

But somebody else had spoken Snape's name, quite softly.

"Severus..."

The sound frightened Harry beyond anything he had experienced all evening. For the first time, Dumbledore was pleading.

Snape said nothing, but walked forward and pushed Malfoy roughly out of the way. The three Death Eaters fell back without a word. Even the werewolf seemed cowed.

Snape gazed for a moment at Dumbledore, and there was revulsion and hatred etched in the harsh lines of his face.

"Severus...please..."

Snape raised his wand and pointed it directly at Dumbledore.

"*Avada Kedavra!*"

A jet of green light shot from the end of Snape's wand and hit Dumbledore squarely in the chest.

When you first read the book, what were your thoughts on what is going on here?

14. How did you feel at the end of the book the first time you read it?

15. Are there any other questions you would like to ask, or things you'd like to discuss?