Though perhaps too recently published to yet be deemed a true classic of children’s literature, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* has undoubtedly changed the course of popular children’s fiction. Though incredibly popular, and in turn beginning the most popular children’s series of all time, *Harry Potter* has also seen its share of critics and opponents who have attempted to block it from public and school libraries across the country.

The book follows eleven year old orphan Harry Potter as he discovers that he belongs to a magical world that exists alongside our own, a world where magic is indeed real. Imagined in highly humorous fashion, this is a world where magical owls deliver mail, broomsticks are a highly regarded form of travel, dragons and other magical creatures are hidden from those in the normal world and students are educated at schools of magic such as Hogwarts. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* succeeds on multiple levels, as not only a comedy but the beginning of a seven volume coming of age story. Harry himself is a likeable character, amazed as the reader at the strangeness of the world he’s entering, but also a sympathetic character as we see him learn about his parents and the world they were a part of.
Objections to the series tend to focus largely on the idea that magic is treated as ‘real’ in the books, making them dangerous for children to read. More extreme but related arguments claim that due to the discussion of magic *Harry Potter* promotes witchcraft as it therefore quite dangerous. In reading *Harry Potter*, however, it seems quite apparent that the magic in the books isn’t anything like Wicca or other witchcraft-related religions, nor does the book pretend to be anything but a fantasy. While worry over children understanding fiction may be a real concern for some parents, there seems little to suggest that such a problem is more likely, or more serious with *Harry Potter* than with any other fictional story. Not only are they clearly a fantasy, making no attempt to indoctrinate or teach children magic, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* contains a strong message of good vs. evil and the willingness to sacrifice oneself to save others. For this, as well as the high quality of the writing and their fantastically broad appeal to children and parents alike, *Harry Potter* seems indispensable to any modern children’s library.

In summary, despite the objections made towards the books in the *Harry Potter* series they seem to exemplify many of the traits of classic children’s books: a genuinely unique setting, understandable and empathetic characters, clear distinctions between good and evil and above all they’re simply fun (and funny) to read. Children’s fiction is replete with wonderful fantasies, and it seems likely that the *Harry Potter* series will be included in lists of classic children’s literature for many long years to come.