

LUMOS MAXIMA

*A thousand years or more ago
when I was newly sewn,
there lived four wizards of renown,
whose names are still well known:
bold Gryffindor, from wild moor,
fair Ravenclaw, from glen,
sweet Hufflepuff, from valley broad,
shrewd Slytherin, from fen.
They shared a wish, a hope, a dream,
they hatched a daring plan
to educate young sorcerers
thus Hogwarts School began....*

Oh, hi there! I was humming my favourite song. Do you know the lyrics? Yes? Then, sing along! Wait, why are you staring at me? You don't know who I am! You must be Crabbe. I am the sorting hat!! What do I do? I see everything. I hear everything. Everything that happens at Hogwarts, I know everything. Want to know what happened on March 29th?

While the paralysed Womping Willow held the letters for the first-year students, an owl observed them. A boy named Neville had lost his toad Trevor again. Trevor had found a friend near the pond, and now there were two.

While Prof. McGonagall and Prof. Dumbledore waited for the students to come to the great hall, a few students lost their way. Hogwarts is unplottable for its safety; Muggles are not welcome here. Some of the students end up in the Dark Forest. Dumbledore and McGonagall had to help them, find them, and bring them to the great hall.

When all the students came together, Professor McGonagall (Priya) told all the students to collect their letters. I can still see the sparkle in their eyes when they said, "Finally, Hogwarts called me. I got my letter!" Or was it Peeves showering the glitter in the air?

Students read their letters, smartened themselves, stood in a line, and followed Professor McGonagall to the great hall. The floating candles welcomed them under the enchanted clear sky. Did you hear Hermione Granger saying, "I have read about them"? Bathilda Bagshot did describe it vividly in her book *The History of Magic*.

'Welcome to Hogwarts,' said Professor McGonagall. 'The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts.'

Before the sorting ceremony (when they met me), they had to tell what the bookmarks in their seats said. Who said them? When did they say them?

"I am dying". Malfoy yelled as the class panicked. "I am dying, look at me! It's killed me!"

Remember when that blonde bloke insulted Buckbeak, and Buckbeak taught him a lesson? Well, it didn't end well for Hagrid, for he lost Buckbeak until he got him again as Witherwings. Shh...don't tell the ministry who Witherwings is.

McGonagall heard all the answers but didn't tell anyone what the right answers were. Somehow, she gave me all the puzzles from the third year of Harry Potter. Well, I love that year too. That year, Hogwarts saw a strong Patronus running after those ghastly cold Dementors after a long time.

Then, they called me. Oh, I love sorting students into their houses!

*There's nothing hidden in your head
The Sorting Hat can't see,
So try me on and I will tell you
Where you ought to be.*

I heard the voices of their hearts and the desires of their minds. Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, Gryffindor, Slytherin, Slytherin, Slytherin... That day, I put a lot of students in Slytherin house, only a few in Gryffindor. Salazar Slytherin, I have had enough of your pure blood mania!

The feast was ready. That painting on the fifth floor, have you seen it? No? Well, Fred and George will come back for some more food. Thanks to the S.P.E.W., Hogwarts now takes care of the rights of the elves. That night, students made their sandwiches while elves gave them the ingredients. They swapped their stories with each other under the enchanted starry sky. Seamus Finnigan is half and half, I heard.

The students were given a task to free an elf named Dobby. They decided to give him socks. The task was to throw a ball of sock (found under Harry's trunk?) into a hole. A good practice before their Quidditch class, I might add. Sadly, not one ball got through. More sadly, the poor elf got beaten up a lot. I see Lucius Malfoy in their hearts. A nasty boy he was!

Now that the students were fed, it was time for another task. Reading! Books, not the tea leaves (not now, Trelawny!) The first day of school.

"Potter, what would you get if you added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?" Snape had asked. Merlin's beard, it was good that McGonagall didn't turn Harry and Ron into a map. Snape would've loved that. Another nasty but brave kid of Slytherin he was!

It was time to read the story of a boy who lived, Harry Potter. Starting from his first year, how he came to Hogwarts with Ron and Hermione, fought with a troll, fought with Quirrell and then Voldemort himself, and how he found and saved the Sorcerer's Stone. Then, Naisargi read the scene when Ron, Fred, and George stole their father's car to rescue Harry from

Dursley jail. She shared how she loved the scene emphasising the value of friends we have in life and the second family we find in them.

Then came Yatvi and Krish. They brought that beetle Rita Skeeter back into the Hogwarts with Harry locked up with her in a broom cupboard. Yatvi, with her comical portrayal of Skeeter, reminded me of the time when she vilified Dumbledore with her reporting. Krish, bringing out his inner voice artist, made us hear the scribbling, quibbling quill. I wanted to know when Skeeter with her pursed lips would say, *"Scratch that."*

The class moved on to the last book, and they reached Godric's Hollow, with Harry and Hermione finding the grave of Harry's parents. While Bagshot (or slimy Nagini) was watching them, Harry and Hermione met Harry and Dumbledore's deceased families. The grief Harry held in him found a way through his tears while Hermione placed a wreath on his parent's grave. It was a painful Christmas Eve. The betrayal he felt from Dumbledore was slowly abating, but he still needed a lot of answers.

It was 19 years after the Battle of Hogwarts. Harry sent his kids to the school, and the scar hadn't hurt once in 19 years. Everything was fine.

Moving from Harry's story, Ashwathy moved the class to the world of Fantastic Beasts and the history of Quidditch. Samir Ji then took us into the world of Tom Sawyer through his vintage edition book, and we saw how the famous fence was painted. I thought I was old, but that book was printed in 1950.

What is your Why? Find your why! It was a good reminder to not forget why we started something in our lives. I always remember why I was born: to sort the students!!

Is Hogwarts even real? What if it is only in your head? *"Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?"* Remember, Dumbledore said it? Akanksha reminded us through her book not to narrow our minds and to be open to belief. ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

Shivam took us to the kitchen of the economist Abhijit Banerjee through the latter's book Chhaunk. A delicious read; I will read that later.

A few students couldn't read their books for it was time for the quiz. At the beginning of the class, the students were given a puzzle in which they had to find the names of all the characters of the Harry Potter world. I loved how Sirius and Severus cut each other's throats on that piece of paper as well, while Harry, Ron, and Hermione stuck together all the time.

Akanksha solved the puzzle the fastest, earning 50 points for her house, i.e., Slytherin.

The last task was answering the quiz questions. Let's see how much they love Harry Potter. While it was harder to see who raised their hands first, Chirag, Jainal, Maaie, and Shreyansh ensured the points were distributed fairly with their hawk eyes. The scores were tied

between Yatvi, Akanksha, and Rijuta. *'In which animal do you find a bezoar?'* broke the tie when Rijuta answered first with "GOAT".

Rijuta was awarded socks for winning the quiz. And it was time for the House Cup!!

Keeping all the events and points in mind, Slytherin house was awarded the House Cup.

"Now, as I understand it, the House Cup here needs awarding, and the points stand thus: In fourth place, Gryffindor, with three hundred and twelve points; in third, Hufflepuff, with three hundred and fifty-two; Ravenclaw has four hundred and twenty-six and Slytherin, four hundred and seventy-two."

The feast ended, and all the students went back to their homes.

"And suddenly, their wardrobes were empty, their trunks were packed, Neville's toad was found lurking in a corner of the toilets; notes were handed out to all students, warning them not to use magic over the holidays ('I always hope they'll forget to give us these," said Fred Weasley sadly)"

"It took quite a while for them all to get off the platform. A wizened old guard was up by the ticket barrier, letting them go through the gate in twos and threes so they didn't attract attention by all bursting out of a solid wall at once and alarming the Muggles."

Thanks to Samir Ji, who helped the students find their Hogwarts and be who they are, witches and wizards. Thank you to Priya, Chirag, Maaie, Jainal, Shreyansh, and Vinita for bringing students into the school of their dreams, Hogwarts.

NOX.