

Currency	Sell	Buy
EUR/USD	1.2052	1.2055

Sections
Top Stories
Latest News
Scotland
UK
International
Politics
Sci-Tech
Health
Education
Entertainment
Gaelic
Features
Opinion
Obituaries
Article Index
Hot Topics
British Army
SNP
Iraq
Sudan
Tobacco
Topics A to Z

JK Rowling & Harry Potter

SCOTLAND on SUNDAY
Sun 29 Dec 2002

printer friendly email article

Vigil for a dying girl that left footprints on Rowling's heart

AP/REUTERS TOBY MCDONALD

JK ROWLING fulfilled a dying child's last wish by telephoning her from 3,000 miles away and reading chapters from an unpublished Harry Potter novel, it has emerged.

Nine-year-old cancer victim Catie Hoch was desperate to read the fourth Harry Potter novel but was certain to die before it was published.

Rowling heard of her plight and telephoned Catie's home in Albany, New York. As the little girl lay dying, Rowling read chapters from the then unpublished Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire direct from the manuscript.

The extraordinary transatlantic relationship between the multi-millionaire author and tragic girl has only been revealed after Rowling made a \$100,000 (£62,000) Christmas donation to a fund set up in Catie's memory.

Rowling has also written to Catie's parents telling them: "She left footprints on my heart."

The youngster was diagnosed with a kidney tumour shortly before her sixth birthday.

The neuroblastoma, an aggressive childhood cancer, quickly spread to her liver, lungs and spinal column.

As the cancer took hold, blonde-haired Catie's only comfort was to escape into the magical world of boy wizard Harry Potter.

When the youngster suffered a relapse, and was given only weeks to live, her mother, Gina, wrote to Rowling's publishers about the then unpublished fourth book, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

She was stunned when a personal e-mail arrived back from the author. As Catie's condition deteriorated, the two began to write regularly.

Then, as the little girl had only days to live, Rowling telephoned to read Catie chapters from the manuscript.

Yesterday her mother said: "Catie never complained or asked, 'Why me?' She was a ray of sunshine.

"Jo used to e-mail Catie and send her presents. She even called our home to read to Catie. I must have written her a note telling her about the Foundation, and a few weeks ago we received a \$100,000 donation from her. Catie continues to work her magic."

“Don't thank me, I feel truly honoured to have known your daughter”

News Archive Search

Harry Potter: Page 1

- Rowling's magic cauldron brims over (16-Jan-03)
- Harry Potter keeps sales growing at Bloomsbury (10-Jan-03)
- Web of fantasy turns the boy wizard blue (05-Jan-03)
- Vigil for a dying girl that left footprints on Rowling's heart** (29-Dec-02)
- Glencoe setting for Potter film will bring in £3m (21-Dec-02)
- Rowling's notes fetch £26,000 (16-Dec-02)
- Harry Potter plot teaser card sells for £28,680 (13-Dec-02)
- Charity sale gives clue to new Harry Potter book (12-Dec-02)
- Rowling gives £500,000 for MS research (05-Dec-02)
- German publishers win right to use Potter name (05-Dec-02)
- Policeman guilty of deception (27-Nov-02)
- Hogwarts takes high road for Potter III (24-Nov-02)
- Potter casts double spell on six out of ten children (21-Nov-02)
- PC charged over Potter books sale (21-Nov-02)
- New Potter film breaks UK record (19-Nov-02)
- Potter spin-off spellbound by legal guardians (17-Nov-02)

Websites

- JK Rowling (official site)
- Harry Potter (official site); The Leaky Cauldron (fan

Neuroblastoma is the third most common form of childhood cancer. Catie was diagnosed with the disease in 1998, after which surgeons removed one of her kidneys, her adrenal gland, three-quarters of her liver and portions of her lungs.

She endured seven rounds of high-dose chemotherapy, radiation and numerous clinical drug trials.

But after almost two years of treatment she was told that the cancer had returned in a more aggressive form.

The youngster was given just months to live and had only one wish. Her mother had almost finished reading the third book in the series, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

Catie wanted to have her mother read her book four, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

But Rowling was still writing it and the book wasn't due out for many months. Catie did not have that long.

A friend of a friend sent an e-mail to Rowling's publisher, Bloomsbury, in England. A short while later, an e-mail arrived.

"Dear Catie. I am working very hard on book four at the moment ... on a bit that involves some new creatures Hagrid has brought along for the care of Magical Creatures classes. You are an extremely brave person and a true Gryffindor. With lots of love, J.K. Rowling (Jo to anybody in Gryffindor)."

Rowling sent Catie a plush stuffed owl named Pigwidgeon (a character in her book) for Valentine's Day along with a card. Two weeks after Valentine's Day, Rowling wrote again.

Catie dictated her replies to her mother, who typed them into their home computer and sent them to the author by e-mail. Mostly Catie talked about the intricacies of the Harry Potter plot, her family and friends.

And Rowling replied: "I love you even more for telling me to make book four long, because I am worried about how long it's getting. You've cheered me up a lot. Lots of love. Your friend right back. Jo XXX"

Defying doctors' predictions, the little girl made it through her ninth birthday in March. She received a card and presents from Rowling, a soft toy and a fantasy book.

But by Spring Catie had lapsed into a coma. When she awoke, she asked her mother to invite several of her friends round where she gave away her collection of dolls.

As the end came Gina relayed this information to Rowling in an e-mail. A phone call came to the Hochs' Clifton Park home from Edinburgh on a Sunday afternoon. It was Rowling. She wanted to read parts of book four to Catie.

"We laid Catie down on the living room couch, and Jo read to her over the phone. Catie's face just lit up," her mom recalled.

Rowling called three or four more times to read to her, but Catie started failing so badly she couldn't receive any more calls.

Catie died on May 18, 2000. Three days later, Rowling wrote a message of condolence.

"Dear Gina and Larry. I have been away again. I've only just received your message. I have been praying that Catie would be released, that she would go where she can wait happily and painlessly for the rest of us to join her. But there are no words to express how sorry I am.

"I consider myself privileged to have had contact with Catie. I can only aspire to being the sort of parent both of you have been to Catie during her illness. I am crying so hard as I type. She left footprints on my heart all right. With much love, Jo."



weblog)

Vote

Best Harry Potter book so far?

Philosopher's Stone	3.39
Chamber of Secrets	2.49
Prisoner of Azkaban	43.89
Goblet of Fire	22.09
Order of the Phoenix	28.59
5,272 vote	

[Click here to Vote!](#)

HARRY POTTER



[Photo gallery](#)

SCOTSMAN DebRA APPEAL



300 Scottish children suffer from EB, where the slightest touch causes blisters & pain

SUDAN CRISIS



A million lives are at risk in the worst humanitarian crisis facing the World today

Rowling continued to write to Catie's family in the ensuing weeks and shared in their feelings of grief and loss.

"I look back at Catie's e-mails to me and happiness shines out of each and every one. Please don't thank me for anything I did, because I feel truly honoured to have known your daughter, however briefly. Jo XXX"

Following Catie's death her mother Gina Peca, and step-father Larry Hoch, a lawyer established a charity in their daughter's memory.

So far the Catie Hoch Foundation has raised almost £100,000 in two years and made gifts to a hospital and hospice to help children with neuroblastoma.

Then just before this Christmas came their surprise present - a cheque for £62,000 (\$100,000) from JK Rowling.

Yesterday a spokeswoman for JK Rowling said: "We can confirm that a donation was made, but we cannot comment on how much."

DELIVERY FORMATS FOR "**HARRY POTTER**"

[\[more info\]](#)

XML

[RSS feed](#)

JS

[JavaScript feed](#)



[Add to my email](#)