

Transcript

Episode 3.16

Book 3, Chapter 16: Professor Trelawney's Prediction

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Three, Chapter Sixteen: Professor Trelawney's Prediction.

Lorrie: Professor Trelawney's Prediction. It's finals week. There's going to be an appeal of execution for Buckbeak the hippogriff, but the Ministry is sending along an official *and* an executioner even though it hasn't been decided yet. Don't tell Professor Trelawney this, but she made a real prediction. The kids go to be with Hagrid for the execution and they find Scabbers the rat hiding in his hut. So this is the chapter where the ending gets all set into motion, so we better pay attention, and yet it's finals week.

JC: I really love the way that the students at the beginning of this chapter are already checking out for the school year, because it feels like summer.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And that's exactly the time of year we're in right now. As we record this, it's late May. My kiddo just finished finals week this week. School is out here for where I am, so it felt very relatable the way that the kids were yearning to go outside and looking forward to this being over. I thought, 'Oh, my God, yes!' That was my life this week.

Lorrie: And the days are longer, which is going to turn out to be important.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: Although not yet.

JC: So as we've done this reread, from the beginning, one of the things I really wanted to think about is: how is Hogwarts similar or different from schools as I know them? This idea of finals week is a really interesting one, because this happens certainly at the secondary level in the United States. At the elementary level it is very different; at the middle school level, I think it depends district to district, maybe even school to school in how they do this, but the secondary

level is pretty common. You have a completely different schedule for finals and you have two a day, exactly like the way they have it here at Hogwarts. It's interesting, the combination of practical performance-based assessments that the kids are doing versus writing out essay answers and things. It is interesting that a lot of these are very practical exams. They have to be able to show that they can do the things that they were taught this semester, which is really interesting. From an education perspective, I love that it's very performance-based, because you've got to be able to use magic in the real world. That's important, so I love that from a teacher perspective. It is really interesting, though (at least the tasks that we're told about), and I'm sure there was more to it. If you think this is actually happening in some sort of a reality and we're just getting some descriptions of it from this author, and we can peek in and see there's probably more happening. But a couple of things that really stood out to me were one (I think it was in Transfigurations exam), they're turning an inanimate object into what I assume is a living animal. We've seen this before, and it just made me pause and think, 'How does that work?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: How do you go from something that's utterly inanimate to a living creature?

Lorrie: And how long does that last? Because it doesn't always.

JC: Yeah. It reminds me of... In one of the Hitchhiker's Guide books, I guess a whale pops into being and falls to the Earth, and you get this monologue of the whale's inner thoughts the entire way down -- I think I'm remembering the right creature that it was -- until it completely hits the pavement and splat!

Lorrie: Ow, geez.

JC: So you get this inner monologue of this creature that's like, 'Wow, where am I? What is this place? What's happening to me? I feel strange,' all the way down. It makes me think of that a little bit, too. What would it be like to be this tortoise with a shell that's got a pattern like a China set?

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: I just thought, 'Okay, that's a bit... It's interesting,' and I can see why the author wouldn't go into explaining the physics behind it,' but that happens a few times in the series. It just made me go, 'Huh, what's happening there?' I'm a little horrified that they had to perform the Cheering Charms on each other, and I don't know how else you would test this for sure.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But there doesn't seem to be a counter charm that an adult could use to undo any damage done, because Harry over-does his on Ron and they have to take Ron away to let it wear off. Granted, it wears off in an hour, but what happens if it goes horribly wrong and then that kid is screwed for the rest of the day? What?! How do they handle that? It feels like there needs to be some kind of parental permission going on. I don't know. It feels weird to me that you practice this on each other. I can't even think of what the analogous thing would be in the non-magical world. Giving each other shots, like in nursing school? Okay, just saline maybe, but... Anyway, that one I found kind of wild. I think the Flobberworm exam that Hagrid gives is really funny.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

JC: I understand why Hagrid's doing it, because from a teacher perspective. I get that, "You know what? I know that y'all learned shit, and I'm done. I'm just done."

Lorrie: "And I'm not risking anything, and I can't think about this."

JC: Yeah. "I'm not even going to set up anything I have to grade. I'm just done." I definitely understand that feeling from the perspective of a teacher, but it also reminds me of those tests that you sometimes give little kids where there's a big long set of instructions that you read through, and then the very last one says, "Put your name at the top of the paper and turn it in."

Lorrie: Right.

JC: So if the kids don't read the instructions, they have a whole list of math problems to do.

Lorrie: Ugh.

JC: It reminded me of that. "The key is to know that to take care of a flobberworm, you do nothing." You just turn in your name at the end and present your still-alive flobberworm. The fact that they have an Astronomy final at midnight, and then the next morning History of Magic, which is the only one where they have to sit and write, from what I can tell.

Lorrie: It's the most boring one anyway.

JC: It's like, 'Well, that's just setting people up for failure.'

Lorrie: It's so real.

JC: "You've gotten four hours of sleep."

Lorrie: That's so much what would happen.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Now sit down and write for three hours." Oh, my God, that's just so awful. Then I love the fact that the Defense Against the Dark Arts exam is probably the most interesting one that they do, and it's clear that this is the one where the professor actually put a lot of thought into, 'What would be a really good way? I taught them all these things. What would be the best way to see if they learned what I actually set out for them to learn?' He creates this obstacle course that they have to get through each part of it and it builds on itself as it goes along. I thought, 'Okay, Lupin is a really good teacher.' This is what a good teacher would do: they would create this really interesting practical exam. I was really fascinated by all the exams, and then we'll get to Trelawney's later.

Lorrie: Woo hoo! Yeah, I loved reading about the exams, because this seems like the kind of thing that the author invented this series for way back. It's what it would be like to be one of these kids doing their everyday training to do magic. The question about whether you can actually turn a teapot into a tortoise and back again... Well, what they have to do this for is when they interact with Muggles. It's an illusion. It's something that you do to prove that you're a wizard, so it doesn't have to be on the deep identification level, but that seems like something that she would have thought of really early on. What do kids do at a school for magic? Well,

they have to learn to do these things that we know wizards and witches do in folklore. I loved -- oh, I had so much sympathy -- Harry's Confusing Concoction won't thicken.

JC: Oh... I forgot about Potions! I forgot about that one.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, and Snape is so glad to mark him down for that. All I could think of was the many times that I've followed the instructions perfectly and tried to make lemon curd or pastry cream. These things will not thicken for me. Oh, my God. I know I'm doing everything exactly... Anyway, I had a great pang of sympathy for Harry.

JC: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, for sure. And that moment where he sees Snape write something down on his little clipboard that looks suspiciously like a zero.

Lorrie: It's a zero. The quill is making a great big circle.

JC: Oh, no!

Lorrie: Yeah. I was thrilled with Harry's History of Magic exam, because as we know, that's the worst taught class: someone who's dead droning and getting offended when anything interesting happens. This quote, "...Harry scribbled everything Florean Fortescue had ever told him about medieval witch-hunts, while wishing he could have had one of Fortescue's choco-nut sundaes with him in the stifling classroom." First of all, this is a callback to my boyfriend Florean Fortescue, who I have decided is a heartthrob, so erudite and doing what he wants to do with life. But this is how you learn stuff: not by dry lectures, but by having a person impart knowledge to you based on what they find interesting that they think you'll find interesting, too. Something that in my life has always worked is if I eat while I'm reading, I ingest food and I commit to memory at the same time that sense-memory connection. I remember those things better; if I think about what I ate or what I was wearing, or what the temperature was like or some music that was on. That double memory helps me retain the information.

JC: Absolutely. Yeah. There's a couple of other things, too, that you're saying that are making me think about how learning happens best under conditions when we're comfortable.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And we feel safe, and we're having a good time.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. This is one of the things teachers try. At least good teachers try really hard to make their classrooms fun places for kids, because we know that kids are more apt to be engaged in learning if they're actually having a good time, if they like being there, if they like the people they're around, if they like the teacher. All these things are actually really important psychologically for creating a space where kids are going to learn, and a lot of it is for that reason that you just said, which is you're associating good things with the acquisition of this knowledge. The idea that Harry's just having a conversation with Fortescue on a summer day -- he's eating the ice cream, and Fortescue's coming over, "Oh, yeah, blah blah blah blah," they're having a conversation -- that piece of it... Harry felt better in that moment than he probably ever felt in his history class. Of course, when he's thinking about answering all these questions, that's what's going to come up for him, is what was a really good experience of learning. There's that piece of it. There's also the idea, like you mentioned, that Professor Binns (I believe is his name)

is very much like, "This is what I'm going to teach." Well, he's a ghost. "This is what I'm going to teach," and if anything interesting happens he gets really upset.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That way that some teachers can't let go of their authority and deciding what we're going to do and how we're going to do it, and how that really shuts down kids -- particularly adolescents - - who are really, really curious about the world, whose brains are growing in a way that makes them really capable of soaking up a lot of stuff and focusing on things that are important to them. Sometimes the things that are important to them are not the things that we want them to learn. They're like, 'No, what I'm really focused on today is figuring out how to make this thing happen that is probably breaking the rules, but...' That's how adolescents' brains work. If you don't create a space in a classroom for adolescents in particular -- so upper-middle school, high school -- where kids can have some autonomy and some agency and make some choices about what they're learning, and then feel like you are treating them like a grown-up -- they want that veneer of, "I'm treating you like a grown-up. I'm showing the respect I would show a grown-up and I'm still setting boundaries because you're a kid, but we're going to create this space where you feel like you have some agency" -- that is so important, and none of the kids have that in the History of Magic class. You go in, there might as well be a video playing; you've just got to take notes. Fortescue gives that to Harry, too. There's this, "We're just two people talking." He's not being talked down to, so there's all these wonderful things happening in that learning moment with Fortescue back in the summer, and I love that callback to it here.

Lorrie: I think there's more, though. It's not just that the Binns method is dry; there's a puritanical suspicion of pleasure in learning. One of the things that Binns gets offended by is, "No, you can't enjoy what you're learning. You have to apply a certain discipline to it." This relates, in my mind, to the way that people are suspicious of fanfiction or genre writing, as opposed to fiction that is ostentatiously difficult that you feel virtuous for having finished. Is that somehow better? Why? Is pleasure -- is the appetite for it, is the readability the thing that makes you want to just keep consuming -- is that suspect? Is that sinful in some way? I don't think it is, but there's a lot of suspicion around it. On the other hand, when there is this appetite, you retain better and the pace of learning is better. The way that Fortescue gives Harry both history and ice cream sundaes... I think it's neither adult- nor child-centered. It's an ageless approach of, 'Of course humans have an appetite for these things. These things are fun. These things are delightful; you want to know this. Oh, and that was interesting because it connects to this other idea, and that's why, in the present day, we have this result.' The same way that he's showing up periodically with new concoctions, like, "Oh, Harry, I just combined chocolate sauce with this particular topping, see what you think." This delighted way of presenting somebody else with something you thought of that they might enjoy, too: If it's done in that delighted way with learning, to me, it hits the exact same pleasure spot as creating a dessert and serving it. When we talk about using fandom in the classroom -- using fandom interest and fandom energy to facilitate some kind of learning that is already required -- I see some of that energy coming into it. This delight of, "We could talk about something fascinating. We could have a dessert that looks good." It's the same eagerness. Anyway, I also just love food and I love dessert, and children's literature in particular is somewhat associated with having pleasant snacks while you read. That's something that this series really leans into: the association of delightful, kid-pleasing snacks.

JC: Ah, that's interesting.

Lorrie: And pleasure reading, because the Harry Potter series is definitely not a textbook series. It's definitely meant to be read for pleasure.

JC: Yeah. Do you think there are a lot of people who, even before everything happened with the author... Out in the world, there were a lot of people who really like to be very critical of the series and say it's not very good, it's not this, it's not that; the implication was always, "If you enjoy this, then you just aren't a very sophisticated reader."

Lorrie: I think so.

JC: It's a lot. So you think it's connected to this puritanical thing that you were thinking about before?

Lorrie: Yeah, and I think maybe there were sometimes fears when adults who were skeptical of the series found themselves enjoying it and getting lost in it. They felt a little ashamed of themselves, because sometimes when there's a very strict sort of condemnation of something that's popular and likable, well, so what? Are you embarrassed about yourself? Are you condemning the people who like this, or are you condemning yourself? And are you afraid that somehow this was so enjoyable that your critical faculties were turned off? Did this sneak something by you? What are you afraid of? It's okay. Anyway, Harry obviously did the best History of Magic exam he's ever done and will ever do.

JC: Another thing to touch on here is that way back in the beginning of the book, when we talked about the Boggart In the Wardrobe, you pointed out that the fact that Hermione didn't get to do it was going to be a problem for her later and then here we see that. Hermione cannot get out of the boggart closet without... She can't dispel the boggart.

Lorrie: My rage is barely containable. I cannot read this chapter without exploding with rage at Lupin. It makes me so angry. He thinks he's set up this great final exam that blows everyone else's final exam out of the water. He's thought of everything, except for Hermione. Why didn't he let her have a chance? Did he assume that she would be fine? She's not fine. He didn't teach her at all and she fails. Why is she the only person he never bothers to teach? Either it's because he's personally threatened by her (which is definitely a possibility, and we'll see that in the coming chapters) and/or people don't think that gifted children need even the same basic education that they provide as a baseline for every other student, and then they're shocked when the student can't even do the basics because nobody has checked up on them. This incident illustrates so many different plot points at once; it's quite brilliantly done, because not only is this showing that Lupin fell down on the job for a student, who is actually a pretty important student that he should be teaching because he is there for Defense Against the Dark Arts, and she is the only thing that stands between Harry Potter and disaster.

JC: True.

Lorrie: He fell down on that, but also we get the payoff to the joke that Ron made many chapters ago. "Oh, what's your boggart going to be?" Of course, he was exactly right. That is what her boggart is, and it's foreshadowing about how much it weighs on a child when they know that a very trusted adult has staked their own professional reputation on making an exception for the kid. McGonagall has done everything: she has staked her own reputation on Hermione being worth a Time-Turner to the Ministry and breaking all of these rules, and Hermione lives with that pressure not only to do what McGonagall promised Hermione would do, but to then justify this

trust by excelling in every area, and also incidentally not cracking under the strain. And what's her nightmare about it? That she's going to let down the trust that somebody broke rules for her. We know that this happens with Harry the whole book, starting with him having to be warned, "You know, the Weasleys are making a lot of changes to their lives for you." "Oh, yeah. Oops." And then Lupin really harping on Harry's guilt by saying, "You're violating your parents' sacrifice by forgetting to be grateful every single second that you're thirteen," and Snape being mad at Harry for the exact same thing. "Oh, the Minister of Magic is coming to Hogwarts worried about you. We're all putting up with dementors for you, and you're just jaunting off to Hogsmeade," and Harry's like "I forgot!" But meanwhile, there's Lupin's secret, and that's the one that's going to be the biggest and guiltiest one at the core of everything dangerous that happens in this novel. It's the secret that he's keeping even though it's betraying the exception and the trust that somebody really important made on his behalf. Showing what it does to Hermione, it's funny. "Oh, Hermione, so you failed one thing on a final ever," which this is going to be the lowest grade she ever gets on a final. "Haha, I think you'll survive." But it captures so many plot lines right here, and it's memorable because Hermione's failures are memorable. Every time Hermione fails at anything, it means something for the plot. So here we find out that Lupin is a terrible Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher for Hermione -- dreadful -- and the only thing she learned in that subject all year has come from Snape, who is actually not a bad teacher for her. Anyway, I'm the only person I know who gets pissed off about this, but I cannot let it go. And he has the nerve to be shocked! He's looking off in the distance all happily while Hermione's doing her final, because he thinks she's going to ace it; then she bursts out and he's startled. 'Dude, you could have prevented this.'

JC: Yeah. Okay, yeah. I can't help but see this from the perspective of a teacher. Yeah, I can absolutely see how he would think, 'Yeah, Hermione is going to be fine,' and how there's a thousand ways in which you can fail any particular student on any particular day. That's part of what makes it really hard to be a teacher: you've got 150 kids, and you have to know where all of them are at every moment on a learning trajectory. Then there's all this pressure to especially help the ones who are lower performing. Those are the ones that the administration is telling you, "You've got to get these kids to pass their exams. You need to go and pay attention to those kids. We've got kids who got passed through and they can't read, blah, blah, blah." It is really easy as a teacher to look at the kids who you think, 'Okay, they've got the parent's support at home, blah blah blah. Those are the kids that I've got to parse out my time and those are the kids that I just don't have enough hours in the day to pay attention to,' and that happens all the time. It's just a part of the reality of giving teachers more than they can handle every day. I look at this and I'm like, 'Oh.' It's not that I'm saying it's right, but I can see how it happens. Good lord.

Lorrie: No. That's how it happens in the real world; that is not how it happens at Hogwarts. *Nobody* is telling *any* of the teachers at Hogwarts *anything* about *who* needs extra support. *Nobody* is following up on *anybody*.

JC: It's amazing that people come out of this institution having learned shit, honestly.

Lorrie: Teachers make up their curriculum and their standards as they go along, and Lupin is avoiding Hermione for some reason. It took him actual effort to suppress her from having the chance that everyone else is getting. It's reflecting some sort of resistance that he has in his own mind, and it would be nice if everything that you just said were a little bit more incorporated

into the schooling that these kids get at this private school with no rules, but I don't think anybody is tracking which kids get parental support at home from their learning.

JC: Well, they're not at home, for one thing.

Lorrie: They're not.

JC: They're at school, so that piece of it is... yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Whatever privilege you came in with, it's all in the backpack. It's all in the invisible backpack, to quote a phrase. Yeah, it's not like you're going home and getting help from your parents at night, so yeah. Yeah, but I think it's interesting because, as we always do, our own personal experiences in our lives... It's hard to peel that away and look at the text without that.

Lorrie: Well, I think my point here -- which I know I'm the only person in the world who cares about this -- is that Lupin's internal hesitations are super important to the plot of this whole book. His hesitation around Hermione -- knowing that she is somebody that challenges the lies he tells himself, challenges the guilt that he's suppressing about having betrayed the trust of somebody who made exceptions for him -- this is going to turn out to be important. Lupin's slipperiness and the negotiation he's always having inside himself about what to admit to himself -- what to admit to other people -- that is the incredibly fertile, wonderful ground that this novel's layers of understanding... That's where this novel is based: Lupin's secrets, why they're important, how emotional they are, how dependent they are on relationships and what's important to people. What is causing him to behave like anything he does in this novel -- Everything Lupin does in this novel is so shrouded in mystery. Why did he just do that? Why did he tell Harry, "Oh, the Marauders? We've met." What does that mean? How did he decide to tell him "We've met" like he knows something, but not to tell him more? How does he decide to smile pleasantly at Snape while being scared that Snape is about to get him on something, while Snape is barely restraining himself from lunging at Lupin and screaming? And while Lupin is deciding to be all calm and funny... oh, look, there's Peeves with a rhyme about how Lupin is a werewolf. How does Lupin respond? What choice does he make? What is he depending on for people to notice or not notice? All of this is the basis for the uncertainty that makes this an incredibly rich novel about how every person's point of view changes the interpretation, and I'm never ever going to be able to let go that Lupin set Hermione up to fail and went out of his way to do so. Hermione fails so infrequently that every time it happens in the series, yeah, pay attention to that for plot purposes. Anyway... For Hermione, it's okay. McGonagall is not going to be mad at you. It's okay. It's okay.

JC: So what we have left is Divination, which takes place in the tower, and it's a one-on-one oral exam where the students have to go in...

Lorrie: Terrible.

JC: Right. It's horrible. And look into the crystal ball, which feels like an opportunity for Trelawney to go, "Oh, you just don't have any talent in this area," because no one looks in the crystal ball and sees anything apparently, except for maybe a few people.

Lorrie: Parvati does.

JC: Yeah, yeah. Except for a few people, like the ones that are already really excited about this subject, and the fact that Harry has to go last is very interesting to me. That feels set up, because they're clearly not going in alphabetical order.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because Ron went right before Hermione. I love this image of Ron's large feet coming down the stairs.

Lorrie: Yeah, the large feet. So real.

JC: Okay, yeah, that's very middle school. Then Ron's like, "Well, I just made up shit. I just looked in the crystal ball and said I saw shit, and that seemed to be okay," so that's in Harry's mind as he goes up. He's like, "I'm not going to see anything." That whole little bit... It's funny when he's staring and he's thinking, 'I'm going to make up something,' and Trelawney tries to guide him toward, "Oh, the Hippogriff, its head... Does it still have its head?" and Harry's like, "Uh, yeah, it's flying away," which I think is really interesting because that's actually what happens at the end of the book.

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: So yeah.

Lorrie: I love how disappointed she is, because she had saved him to be the cherry on top for herself. It's been a long finals week, and when she says, "No weeping Hagrid?" Oh, her dashed hopes... I feel, actually, a little pang for her. This was going to be so fun; he's ruining it.

JC: And then, of course, we get the moment.

Lorrie: Yeah. I do feel it's unfair to be tested on Divination, because either you have the gift or you don't.

JC: And it also seems clear that it's not within your control when you have access to it and when you don't.

Lorrie: Yeah. If you're somebody like Parvati who's born with sensitivity to those vibrations, excellent, great. But it's not an entirely useless class, despite how inept and laughable Trelawney is. They do get a really good exposure to different forms of divination. What it's like... If somebody asked these kids after school, "Hey, do you know anything about reading bird entrails?" They would be able to say, "Yes, actually. This is what you do. I didn't see anything, but the history of it goes like this. You're supposed to be able to see this and that." It's not a bad education they get.

JC: It's not a terrible class. It's not a joke. I think often it is presented as, 'Okay, the whole class is a joke,' especially because Hermione really believes that to be true and we trust Hermione as readers. The fact that Hermione is like, "This is bullshit, I'm out of here," makes us not want to take Trelawney seriously even more than perhaps we were feeling before.

Lorrie: Trelawney, as a classroom experience, is a very recognizable and specific experience that you have as a student where you don't respect the teacher, but there's a certain performance they want out of you. You can try to fight it like Hermione does; it's a losing battle, because they're really convinced. You can go along with it, you can humor the teacher, but you

don't really believe in it because you don't fully respect her as an intellectual and as an adult. That's not ideal, but you have to get through it and that is something that you have to endure as a student at some point in your career. It's really not desirable to have an adult that you can't respect. That part is sad, but it's also life and kids are pretty young by the time they already learn this, where you'll see kids say to each other, "Oh, you got that teacher. Well, just go along with what they do and you'll be fine." It's a world weariness that happens pretty young. But yeah, no, they do actually learn about different forms of divination, and that's the odd thing that happens in this chapter: in this series that is overtly skeptical about a lot of new age or mystical things, we see something that is obviously meant to be genuine divination. It really happens. It goes straight to the heart of this series. It's powerful and it's undeniable, so do we suspend our belief or not? This series has simultaneously disbelieved and believed. It's fun, and the fact that Trelawney doesn't know about it somehow makes it more authoritative.

JC: And then not only doesn't know about it, but then denies that it happened. It's so interesting to me that when she does a real thing, she doesn't want to jump on that and go, "Oh, I said that? Oh, well, you know, sometimes the Sight comes to me that way." That didn't happen.

Lorrie: No.

JC: She just completely shut it down. Wow.

Lorrie: She can't just... yeah. The way that it exposes how knowledgeable she is about her lies when she says, "I would never presume to say something as far-fetched as *that!*" Trelawney is one of the people that, after the series was over, the author identified as a Ravenclaw; that's a quality that she shares with another bad teacher, Lockhart, where the students don't respect them as scholars and wonder, 'Do they know what kind of bullshit they're spouting?' Then something that the teacher says reveals, 'Oh, yeah, they knew all along,' and that coldness is part of this author's distrust toward people that she sorts into Ravenclaw. But yeah, just the fact that Trelawney knows she's making this up... "That falls beyond the purview of what I feel like my theatricality can cover. I don't mess with Dark Lords."

JC: But you do. That's why you're here.

Lorrie: Yeah, and her naivete about it is one of the really most touching things about this character.

JC: Yeah, you start to understand. I think this scene makes her go from being some kind of a weird kook to 'Oh, she's vulnerable, and that's why she's here.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I really understand that's why Dumbledore has kept her here. That's why she has a job. That's why. Yeah.

Lorrie: She's not in control of these forces. Why are we teaching this? Yeah, and it also opens up the possibility, the fantasy, of a better way to teach Divination, which would be to respect that there are mysteries that humans go through and don't understand; attempts to control them or to teach them like this... the more you try, the farther you get from what is really happening, the actual mysticism of it. But yeah, this prediction from Trelawney makes a huge case for this author actually believing in Divination. I respect it. I find her prophecy thrilling. I find the way that

her voice changes thrilling. I do believe I've seen examples of that happening with people in real life; I can't explain it, and I sure don't have it myself and I don't think I could learn.

JC: Do we want to talk about what she actually says, about the prophecy she actually makes?

Lorrie: I want to go first toward the buildup of Buckbeak's appeal and then meet that important prophecy that she makes, because as everybody else has been struggling between the great weather outside and the stress of final exams, Harry, Ron, and Hermione have been stressing over Buckbeak's possible execution. At the beginning of the chapter, they get this notice that Buckbeak's appeal has been scheduled and there's a Ministry of Magic official coming to hold the appeal at the same time that they're also bringing an executioner. This beautiful, illogical contradiction sets off the gradual development of activists in these kids because this makes no sense. How do you reconcile that every bit of evidence is that the result of Buckbeak's appeal is a foregone conclusion? Oh, I love Ron has this adorably naive response that, "No, this can't happen... I've spent *ages* reading up on stuff for him; they can't just ignore it all!" That is so relatable. When you did something in good faith, yeah, that is a novice activist. Yes, they will all eventually learn that the powers that be can and will ignore all your effort. That doesn't mean you don't make it; it just means that you understand ahead of time. 'Yes, you're expected to cover all these bases, and no, you can't skip that.' So, there's that, and then gradually through the chapter, there are more and more hints showing your suspicion is correct: they're breaking their own rules, there's not any justice, the world really does run this way. Apparently there's nothing you can do to stop it, and this is where we see Hermione change from being somebody who temperamentally is a rule follower into somebody who, through maturity and experience and intellect, changes into a rule breaker under certain circumstances, which is what an activist is. Sometimes when people talk about Hermione the character and they're stuck on the image of her as a rule breaker, this is where she changes forever. It's a loss of innocence to some purpose and yeah, I love that meeting when Fudge shows up and he talks about how sad he is that this execution is going to happen, and Ron says: "'Does that mean the appeal's already happened?' Ron interrupted, stepping forward. 'No, no, it's scheduled for this afternoon,' said Fudge, looking curiously at Ron." Wait a minute. Why is Fudge looking at Ron like Ron's the one who's confused? They're just so gone in this assumption of corruption, and this assumption that there's absolutely nothing anyone can do about this being the way the world works. Why not? Why are you assuming that? A child's voice will point out the illogical, but is there any official way that they can get justice here? It's closing in on them. No, apparently there isn't. Do you have in front of you the prophecy that Trelawney makes?

JC: "And then Professor Trelawney spoke again, in the same harsh voice, quite unlike her own: *'The Dark Lord lies alone and friendless, abandoned by his followers. His servant has been chained these twelve years. Tonight, before midnight... the servant will break free and set out to rejoin his master. The Dark Lord will rise again with his servant's aid, greater and more terrible than before. Tonight... before midnight... the servant... will set out... to rejoin... his master....'*" Let me get this funny moment where it says, "Professor Trelawney's head fell forward onto her chest. She made a grunting sort of noise.... Then, quite suddenly, her head snapped up again. 'I'm so sorry, dear boy,' she said dreamily, 'the heat of the day, you know... I drifted off for a moment....'"

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, she got out of her own way for a moment there. That's pretty convincing, this prophecy, isn't it? Not the kind of thing that you can ignore.

JC: And it's so interesting, too. I don't know where... Where does this come from? This is something I don't have any sense of what the book's philosophy about this is, and maybe it's just being left a mystery. But where does it come from? The Dark Lord is named, the servant is not named, so we're left to think the servant is Sirius Black when it turns out the servant is someone else, but the Dark Lord will come back in this form that's more terrible than before. There's just a lot of really horrible sounding things, and this is happening, again, at the same time as the whole Buckbeak situation.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's these two things at once. What?!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: And then there's the author's wordplay, "*His servant has been chained these twelve years*," which is the prerogative of a fiction writer. Okay, we're talking metaphorically and the servant did it to himself, but what's happening? We're setting up a mystery. This is good. This is fun. "*Before midnight, the servant will break free*." Okay, something exciting is going to -- Keep turning those pages; it's going to happen! So yeah, I think we're meant to believe, according to the rules of this book, that it's just Trelawney having her gift, that she really does have the Sight and she doesn't have it very powerfully; not like her ancestor, who demonstrated it more frequently, but she does have some. And no, these things are not under human control. Also, oh, no, the Dark Lord's coming back. It had been so nice to have this whole volume with no Voldemort, but yeah, I guess he's coming back. Ugh! So yeah, Harry's freaked out and he comes back to tell Ron and Hermione about it. He's all full of the news about Trelawney making a prediction, and they're all full of the news that Buckbeak's appeal has failed and that he's going to be executed at sunset and that they want to go be with Hagrid to at least support him, even though there's nothing they can do about this. And then we get this beautiful moment where Hermione once again calls in her good girl privilege and uses the way Snape steadfastly refuses to see her ever. Harry's like, "I left my invisibility cloak in the one-eyed witch statue," and she says, "Oh, yeah, if Snape sees *you*, you'll get in trouble, but I can go get it." She can do anything she wants and Snape will never see her.

JC: Even I wrote 'good girl privilege' in my notes, because I was like, 'Yeah, here we go.'

Lorrie: Yeah, but it's also personal. It's also the way that this girl is unusual, and both Lupin and Snape do see her in a way that's different from the way they see most students. And then Ron is awed by her. "'Hermione, I don't know what's gotten into you lately!'... Hermione looked rather flattered."

JC: Yeah. I love that she's really pleased with his approval of her recent rule breaking.

Lorrie: It's kind of hot.

JC: Right, exactly. Right.

Lorrie: "You didn't think I had it in me." She has learned she cannot be a law-abiding person if the law is unjust. If she believes in true justice, she has to be an activist. It's an equation and she's following it through.

JC: I have to say this whole situation with the Ministry -- with Fudge being there and they brought the executioner, and the appeal is obviously a sham, all of it -- feels very relatable right now in the moment that we're in.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: The moment we're in -- we're in May 2024. I work on a college campus. There's been protests across the country focused on college campuses around what's happening in the Middle East, and it feels very relatable right now, the students saying, "We don't trust the government. It feels helpless. We're going to take these desperate actions to protest." It just felt very real in this moment to read that.

Lorrie: And how infuriating it is when people say, "There's nothing we can do about it; these are the way things have always been done." Well, humans invented those rules. Humans can decide to switch back and do things that are just. What's stopping us? I don't know.

JC: Right. In a separate instance of the government being frustrating: I've been doing some work in the last, I guess, eight months in my professional life of working on some government committees around some code for teacher preparation, along with some colleagues who have been also working for this. The ways that we are all having to resist and push back and show the government data that the government will look at and go, "Oh, that's interesting. Anyway..."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I feel that so deeply right now. We've got all this data we can show. We can tell you the facts, we can back it up with evidence. This is what your policies are doing. And yet... "No. Okay, thanks for the information. Anyway, moving right along..."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And to see all these very intelligent, very respected people trying to make a difference and watching it just not work over and over is incredibly... I wish I had a Time-Turner. I don't know what I would do with it. To fix this problem, I have no idea, but yeah. Yeah, I totally feel that right now. Ugh.

Lorrie: The issue that faces us is that the people who are doing the labor in good faith to uphold something that actually matters -- real learning or real kids wanting to learn, people wanting to be educated, people wanting to be better, people wanting to think the way that we as thinking mammals naturally do -- this is worth fighting for. All of the good faith labor that you put in -- hundreds, thousands of hours during a school year -- it's wrong to accept that it's just going to all be pushed aside because somebody doesn't want to allow that into their notion of what matters. If you follow the rules -- you go by protocol, and you put in the genuine labor with genuine sweat in it and people's real hopes in it -- and then you go to present it to the proper channels, who laugh at you and go take a lunch break and don't read what you've written, what do you do with that? The scale of how much heart there is and the labor that goes into caring for people's learning versus the callousness and ease with which it can be dismissed: that scale can make some decisions for you. At that point, you have to know, "I still have to educate these people. I don't care that they think it's not important. I don't care that their agenda is completely different and that this was all a sham. Somehow, I have to find a way to get people the learning that they have demonstrated that they crave as dignified beings." How do you do that?

JC: Yeah. And that's sort of that... Yeah. We're getting off topic now, but yeah. I just spent a few days at a conference and being in conversations with people who are on the ground in school districts talking about the ways that they're addressing all this stuff, and it was just fascinating to hear all the little ways that people who work in schools are resisting every day and listening to the plans that people are making. "Okay, this is what the law says. What can we do with that? We can get around it in this way. We can get around it in that way." And then other people talking about putting more pressure on the government in different ways, and making inroads on some things. There's some data that is so undeniable that if you just show it to enough people, you get some momentum of people going, "Hey, have you seen this data?" to the same people who are in the position to make decisions. It is interesting how much effort it takes from so many people resisting. So many people have to resist, and they have to resist in ways that if you think of it as an individual, you're like, 'This isn't going to make a difference.' But then if everybody's resisting in their own way, it does make a difference. I don't know what this has to do with this chapter, but...

Lorrie: It has everything! I was just thinking we're doing the opposite of going off-topic.

JC: Oh, okay.

Lorrie: This is exactly what Hermione is learning.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And the infuriating spectacle of Fudge sighing as though there were nothing he could do about this when it's such a shame... Oh. OH. If you're not going to be part of the solution, get out of the way, because there is definitely stuff he could do. Being passive enables something destructive here, and exactly what you were talking about is exactly what these kids are doing, too: you can't resist in only one way. You have to do all of the legitimate research and call on the legitimate laws, and you also have to think about ways of protesting and circumventing and subverting. You have to be full systems go on all of those fronts. This is what people mean when they say, in a way that's possibly naive and that does draw some ridicule, Harry Potter and similar YA literature taught a whole generation about resistance. This is the moral argument that this series is making: when the law is against what's obviously right, you have to prioritize what's obviously right. People who are against the Harry Potter series because it advocates breaking rules... Well, that's exactly what this chapter is advocating.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: You as a thinking human look at the rule which was invented by other humans and decide for yourself if it deserves your loyalty or not, if it's based on sound principles, and that is not necessarily a safe thing to be teaching. That's threatening.

JC: Yeah. As much as I hate to say it... We criticize the author a lot, obviously, for her stance on trans folks, but I think that's what she thinks she's doing, what you just described.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She thinks that she's doing what she wrote about.

Lorrie: Well, that's definitely what she's advocating in this chapter, and we do with that what we can. So here's Hermione getting the cloak, getting the kids down to Hagrid's hut. They meet the executioner, McNair, who is a sadist and is terrifying and just obviously lives to kill creatures;

that's what brings him joy in life. Yeah, he is one of the Death Eaters that's just plain scary. There's nothing romantic or humorous or identifiable. It's just like, okay, that is a face of evil. Nothing McNair wants to do is good.

JC: And we see McNair later.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: He pops up a lot later, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. So that's him.

JC: Interesting that this is our introduction to him as the executioner.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then a bunch of things happen when the kids reach Hagrid's cabin that we note in this chapter and that this book sets us up to be re-readers of. There are all these little steps that happen that the book tells us later we're going to have to go back and reread. 'Oh, that's what was happening here. This is where a plot point has space to come in. Huh. I wonder at what point this was intentional. Did the author intend this? Did Dumbledore intend this?' This is something where Harry, Ron, and Hermione (on their first go round, where we're reading it here) are naively experiencing it, and then they're soon going to come back with knowledge to read their own experience for places where they can intervene and effect change. There's some brilliant stuff being set up here, starting with Hagrid shattering his milk jug because he's so upset that his hand is shaking, and the fact that that's an event; it's startling and it makes a noise, which will be important, too. It's sort of also like... I know, JC, that you and I have both enjoyed the movie *Everything Everywhere All At Once*. There have to be these shocking moments to break through people's consciousness, where something really weird happens. There's a point at which a character eats a Chapstick.

JC: I was just thinking of the Chapstick just now! Oh, my God.

Lorrie: And it's so gross, you just stop and go, 'What? Eww, gross!' That visceral response brings you into seeing that moment as something that takes you out of the usual flow of time and consciousness, and that's a moment of potential where you can change the timeline. So yeah, Hagrid shatters a milk jug because he's that upset. That's going to be important later, and Hagrid tells the kids, "Dumbledore's gonna come down while it -- while it happens. Wrote me this mornin'. Said he wants ter -- ter be with me. Great man, Dumbledore." And on this first reading, I just think, 'Oh, that's really nice of Dumbledore. Um, no, I guess later I come back thinking this is the first evidence we have that Dumbledore has already been thinking, 'What do I do to circumvent this inevitable execution?' Dumbledore has a plan, and he's sent out this message to the naive and accepting Hagrid that is definitely true on the surface and that Dumbledore genuinely means, too. But Dumbledore... Okay. Something's happening, somebody's on this. At the moment that I'm first reading this chapter, I don't get that, but I haven't seen anything that's any earlier than that to indicate that Dumbledore has a plan. This is the first sign that I see.

JC: Yeah, we haven't seen much mention of Dumbledore in recent chapters.

Lorrie: And we have this wonderful sentence fragment: "Harry felt strangely unreal," because the kids sense that the execution is coming and that all this stuff is happening that they're about to have to disappear for. "Strangely unreal." Does he sense that this alternative timeline is about to start? Strange happenings are afoot! And we get something that Rowling does a few times in this series that has to do with alchemy. When the story is about to hit a climax: "...to the West, there was a ruby-red glow." That's the *rubedo* stage of alchemy, where everything's about to happen that you've been cooking up all this time. She writes this red glow also into the beginnings of the climax of Chamber of Secrets: "Harry could see the sun sinking, blood red, below the skyline." You think, okay, here we go. This is the point at which... Make sure that you're not going to be disturbed and you have all your snacks and you're settled in, because you're not going to be putting the book down.

JC: You've gone to the bathroom, and you're ready.

Lorrie: Yeah. "Are you busy tonight?" "Yes, don't bother me!" And in Half-Blood Prince, when Harry is trying to talk to Dumbledore about what he's learned about Snape from Trelawney, and Dumbledore won't listen to him because there's something more important about to happen. As that's happening, Harry sees "the bloody tinge cast by the setting sun." All right, here we go! And then in Deathly Hallows, the final battle, THE moment when Voldemort and Harry face down for the final time: "A red-gold glow burst suddenly across the enchanted sky...." Every once in a while, people do the deep dives into the series about how much the author wrote alchemy into it, and she really did.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: It's sustained, which is a call back to the divination. Well, is she skeptical or does she believe? She's having it both ways. All right, that's just how this series does things. But yeah, she loves her new age, this author, as much as she makes fun of it and possibly makes fun of herself. And this chapter ends with "the unmistakable swish and thud of an ax," which is so brilliant, and Hermione sways. She thinks she knows what it means, but we don't actually know what it means. We just hear the sound.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And that's going to mark this spot in time so they can return to it later.

JC: We also have Scabbers, by the way.

Lorrie: Yeah. Oh, my God, I forgot Scabbers! The shattering milk jug! The shattering milk jug! Ah! Ah! Ah!

JC: Yeah. Stepping back, Hermione finds Scabbers inside of a jug, so Scabbers is not dead. Scabbers has been hiding.

Lorrie: And he looks terrible.

JC: Yes, exactly. Literally living the life of an actual rat, and not a pampered pet rat at this point. No rat tonic, no food, no nothing; just looking terrible. Ron is very happy to see Scabbers, and Scabbers is not very happy to see Ron.

Lorrie: No.

JC: And spends the rest of the time trying to get away.

Lorrie: Trying to bite him. I'm sure Ron's got scratches trying to keep this rat in his pocket. Yeah, and the fact that this only comes to light because Hagrid has broken the milk jug and he says, "Oh, there's a spare." Oh, the doom that Scabbers must have felt when he hears that. 'Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no!' The lack of dignity with which he gets tipped out of the milk jug upside down.

JC: Shoved into Ron's pocket.

Lorrie: Oh.

JC: And yeah, so now we're --

Lorrie: We're in it.

JC: And the next chapter has an intriguing title, too.

Lorrie: Oof, it's called Cat, Rat, And Dog with an Oxford comma, because Rat and Dog don't want any chance of being mistaken as being together; they don't like each other. Do you remember, JC: when we were starting out with this book, you said that you remember this being your favorite book and you're wondering at what point that started to really heat up for you. Have you been on the lookout for that?

JC: Yeah. I think this chapter, probably, is where it's like, 'Woof, what's happening?' I think this chapter and the next. I think that when we get to the part with the Time-Turner... I think that's exactly probably the moment where it blew my mind, and then going back and looking at all of this again is uh... yes. We're really hitting the part where this is the moment that I really thought, 'Oh, yeah. Yeah, this is great. This is good.'

Lorrie: Yeah. I'm guessing that, because of you and the person that you are, it was probably the delight with which you could trust this author saying, "Now I'm going to make you go back and reread and perceive things differently. Trust me, it'll be worth it." For you to follow this author's lead and to experience it and find, to your delight, that it's all worth it, I can see that being something that really appealed to you as an individual.

JC: Yeah, definitely, definitely. It had a big impact on me, too. I hadn't done a lot of fiction reading when I came back to the Harry Potter series. I went through a graduate program in the late 90s in mathematics and I didn't read for fun. There was almost no reading; there was no time for it. When I was finished with that -- the decade of the 2000s was when I got into reading Harry Potter -- I had not actually read fiction probably in a decade. It had been a while, so this was like a reintroduction for me to what fiction can be and what it can do. This book just reawakened for me this thought of, 'Oh, this is what fiction can do. These are the worlds it can take you to, these are the things it can do to your mind, make you think and surprise you. Things are happening this way, but when you go back and look, you can see different layers.' That was really a great moment for me. It reawakened me as a reader, as an adult, in a way that without this, I wouldn't have been. I probably would have gone the rest of my life and not really done a lot of reading.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Except for Harry Potter, which is kind of weird because I was in my 30s at the time. But no, it really, really made me a reader again in a way that I don't know if anything else could have done.

Lorrie: So after that, did you just take a greater interest in reading fiction in general?

JC: Yeah, though, honestly -- yes. I would say yeah. Yeah, though I'm looking for that feeling. I'm always looking for that feeling again, so I'm very picky. I'm not the kind of person who has a stack of books that I'm just like, 'Oh, here, let me read this one, let me read that one.' I'm very picky about... I want a very particular experience, and the experience I want is this one. I want the feeling of the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban*. That's what I want. It's really hard to find.

Lorrie: How would you describe that feeling that you're looking for?

JC: Oh... That it's magical, it's exciting. That feeling of not being able to put the book down, and then realizing that there were clues, or there were clues that I didn't see, and that if I go back, I will see them differently and I could not have predicted. That was the other thing: this was the first Harry Potter book for me where I absolutely could not have predicted the ending. There was nothing along the way that made me think, 'Oh.' We didn't even know about the existence of the Time-Turner.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I didn't question too much how Hermione was getting to multiple classes. I just didn't think about it that hard, so it changed my perspective on the whole book and made me want to go back and re-experience those chapters from a new perspective. It's a built-in reread.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: You have to reread it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You can't let that go. I think that this was the moment that the series made me feel like a reader again, and I hadn't really been one for a decade.

Lorrie: Yeah, the fact that it tells you what to do, once you finish the book, that you're not finished yet. Go back. What are you going to do? You immediately go back.

JC: And you can only experience that once. That's the interesting thing, too. You can only have that first read once. You can go back and you add to it and it's richer, but that's an experience I'm always chasing as well: seeing something for the first time and being genuinely surprised and delighted. The subsequent viewings or watchings are important, but you can only have that experience once. Ah, it's beautiful.

Lorrie: This is where you and I are different.

JC: Oh, yeah?

Lorrie: Because it's not common and you can't command it, but I do get that experience more than once on different rereads. A major one that I had with this volume is it took me several reads to understand why Snape was upset for a lot of the middle of this book. I didn't get what he thought was such a big deal until I realized, 'Oh, he thinks that Sirius and Lupin together are

trying to lure Harry Potter out of the castle to kill him.' I did not get that on the first read of this book or on the second or on the third; to me, Snape was just this irrational grumpy teacher who hates werewolves and Harry Potter, and is foaming at the mouth for no reason. And when I realized that, that was a revelation that was built into the end of this book, but there are so many revelations coming...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That when I realized, 'Wait, so Snape was thinking that the whole time, starting from the first moment that he stares with hatred at the new Defense teacher at the welcoming feast? Oh. OH!' And then I had that experience where I went back and reread it from his point of view, and then I thought, 'Oh, my goodness.' Then I also started thinking, 'Wait a minute, so Lupin knew the whole time how Sirius was getting in, but he was so invested in trying to tell himself that that had nothing to do with any of it, that he just had to keep renewing his denial and interacting with students and telling them things while he's saying, "No, no, no, it's okay"?' Huh. So I went and reread from that point of view of Lupin's guilt and also discovering how the Marauders had to keep asking Lupin, 'Wait a minute, so your other *other* grandmother just died?' and seeing that, oh, because of Harry and Ron saying, "Hermione, is there any point in asking you..." "No!" Oh, we've just been shown what that was like, and how at some point you just figure, 'You know what? I love my friend. They don't want to talk about it. They're not pretending that it's not mysterious. But what do they need?' and then the way that Ron and Harry look at Hermione and they think, 'You know what? She's really tired. She's really upset. We have to do something for her.' Oh, so we got shown what that was like. Huh. So yeah, I had this 'going back/new revelation' feeling with this volume more than once, which is what makes me respect it so much because that's something that all the volumes of Harry Potter do: make you go back and reread. But this one... the aftershocks continue. Amazing.

JC: This is also the moment where I realize that I've come to understand through this process -- and also from trying to help my own kid; he was a sophomore in high school this year, and trying to help him with his English homework where he was reading novels and trying to analyze them -- that I have a very high school, at best, understanding. My level of being able to do this kind of analysis is stuck at the high school level, so YA literature is very much in the zone of what I can do. My kid is reading adult novels and having to analyze them, and I'm realizing how hard that work is and that I am unprepared to do it, so it's a relief to come back to a YA novel and feel successful at doing this level of analysis. It's bolstering my confidence after realizing that I cannot help my child with the adult novels that he's reading, so it's a little bit of a surprise to me, thinking, 'Wow, I have a PhD in math and I can't do high school-level English? Holy crap!' But this feels so accessible, and you're right: it rewards rereads and it rewards thinking about it in all these different ways. We talk a lot about how it taught kids how to read, and it's kind of teaching me at the age that I'm at now. It's teaching me things, yeah, which is amazing.

Lorrie: It's teaching you, and yet when you make things -- when you tell stories or you create presentations... I know because I've known you for a long time. For example, in this position you've been in this school year, where you've been making repeated presentations about education policy at the state level -- locally at your university and also at the state level -- I know from knowing how you create presentations that you layer like this and make people go back and reread and say things that are on the surface level and on the macro level at the same time. I've seen you do it. So is it that doing it is one thing and analyzing it is another?

JC: Probably.

Lorrie: Because you *do* do this, and you do it actually a lot more.

JC: But I think the reason that I do that at all comes from my respect for this particular book. I think this book taught me a lot.

Lorrie: That's amazing.

JC: It taught me how to... yeah. I think, too, with my interest in this book, I can trace to things like my respect for the Ocean's Eleven movie series.

Lorrie: Which I haven't seen, but I'm with you. Go ahead.

JC: Oh, God! Ocean's Eleven, I think, is the perfect movie.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: And it's because it does this kind of thing.

Lorrie: I see.

JC: Every bit of dialogue is at the same time mysterious and meaningful, and there are whole scenes in the movie that you won't understand until the fifth watch. It rewards re-watching, and every time I watch it I see something I've never seen before. It's got this kind of structure to it where it feels kind of, 'Oh, yeah, we're just going along,' and then the end blows your mind.

Lorrie: Wow!

JC: And then you're like, 'I have to watch it again.'

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: Yeah. Anyway, I don't think I would have understood or appreciated Ocean's Eleven really until... I had to read this first.

Lorrie: Fascinating.

JC: I don't know. It's just... ugh. Anyway, that's my plug for Ocean's Eleven.

Lorrie: So your professional work as a Math PhD who's an education professor and a policy maker for public education of all grade levels is informed by how *Prisoner of Azkaban* shaped the way you think.

JC: Yeah, yeah. I would say it probably is. This book had a huge impact on me. Absolutely.

Lorrie: So this book has taught you how to be a persuasive rhetorical speaker.

JC: I... possibly, yeah.

Lorrie: How to mount evidence to potentially hostile, influential listeners.

JC: Probably, or at least I tried.

Lorrie: Yeah, to make your presentations enjoyable and therefore have greater impact. Has it also -- I think it has; this is such a leading question. Has it also taught you, like Remus Lupin, when to keep some things to yourself?

JC: Yeah, for sure. For sure. Yeah, I think this is a powerful book in a lot of ways and it definitely changed the way that I think about what fiction can do and really taught me a lot about what I enjoy as a reader, and then that got worked into other parts of my life. Definitely.

Lorrie: What I keep thinking about: when I've thought of you doing committee meeting showdowns in education policy between people who want students to learn and people who have some other agenda that's designed to restrict learning in some way -- I keep thinking of the discussion that Snape and Lupin had in front of a bewildered Harry, where they're having one conversation on the surface and another conversation underneath the surface based on things that they can't and won't say.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And that's very similar to day-to-day politics, I think.

JC: Yeah. Probably so.

Lorrie: Because there's an etiquette, and there are things that everybody knows but you cannot say, and if you do say them, you've lost.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's tense.

JC: Definitely. Definitely.

Lorrie: And I think you don't enjoy that tension, but you will do it.

JC: Yeah, that's true, too. I don't like politics. I don't like the way that you have to say one thing and mean another.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I just want to say what I mean and move on.

Lorrie: Yeah. That would be nice.

JC: And I'm not good at that, so it takes a lot of effort for me to be political, or to be careful or whatever or hide my true feelings about a policy or a situation. I want to be brutally honest about what I think, and it's hard for me to not be brutally honest and to be careful.

Lorrie: But also, there's that feeling of suspicion when you meet somebody who is good at it.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Do they have any stirrings of conscience about this? Are they, like Trelawney, just intentionally being a charlatan and not caring?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Whether people are in good faith or not, whether people actually care or not, it really matters. You may feel like you're not good at this because you have a constant discomfort about it, but that's also the same part of you that keeps you honest because you care. That's a valuable thing, I think.

JC: Yeah, yeah. I think that's probably true.

Lorrie: And this chapter is all about that. 'Well, why should Buckbeak be killed? Why should Hagrid be tortured for no reason? This isn't right. This is sad. We shouldn't be allowing this to happen. What can we do about it?' Meanwhile, what is this rat? Oh, my God!

JC: Yep. It's all going to blow up in the next chapter. I'm excited.

Lorrie: Thank you. Thank you for going through this with me.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Cat, Rat, And Dog, coming up next.

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at HPAfter2020.com. There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts and more. If you like what you heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.