

## TEACHING MAGIC

## Dumbledore had it. Do you? BY DONNA HICKS

## MANY TEACHERS

LOVE the Harry Potter series because it can turn reluctant readers into book lovers. But another reason is that it is essentially the story of students and teachers and their relationships. It's about the teaching of magic, but it is our story, too. In the Harry Potter books, teachers and students work together to defeat evil—just like in real life.

When I took my daughter to see the fifth movie—on opening day, of course—the audience cheered when the power-hungry Professor Umbridge got what she deserved—she who was out to can as many teachers as she could. Some of the cheers were extra loud, and I think they may have come from other teachers in the audience—not just me.

Sure, Umbridge made Harry write, "I will



The teaching world portrayed in the series does have some strange aspects, though. None of the teachers are married or have children. Is this a Hogwarts rule? They do have to live at the school, after all. Or was it just too complicated for the author to have a character be a teacher and a spouse and a parent? As a teacher, spouse, and parent myself, I agree it is complicated at times, but it's quite doable, even without magic.

Another oddity: Once a student graduates from Hogwarts, he or she can teach there the very next year. Apparently, no methods classes are required. Professional development is not

really mentioned. Maybe they use magic to help them teach.

Speaking of which, I wonder if Hogwarts teachers use magic to grade papers. I would like to know that spell. "Gradomindus!" Hmm...it appears that my ruler doesn't really work well as a wand.

How about a spell to get kids to understand a difficult concept? "Comprendo!" That would be magical.

Hogwarts teachers do use magic for

classroom management. They can add or subtract points from a group just by announcing it: "Five points for Gryffindor." It's the ultimate school-wide discipline plan.

That doesn't mean they don't have a few...glitches. In the fourth book, Mad-Eye Moody (or who we think is Mad-Eye Moody) turns Malfoy, a misbehaving student, into a ferret and makes the

ferret bounce painfully up and down while Mad-Eye lectures him: "Never—do—that—again."

Professor McGonagall sees him and asks, "What—what are you doing?"

To which Mad-Eye answers simply, "Teaching."

It's one of the greatest lines of all the books—followed closely by McGonagall's reminder, "We never use Transfiguration as a punishment!" How often do you have to remind your colleagues of that?

Despite all their extra powers, Hogwarts teachers appear to be hardworking, yet under-appreciated. They stick up for one another and for their students. They keep teaching even under stressful circumstances. They have a deep love for the subjects they teach. Sound familiar? I guess the best of Hogwarts is the same as the best at muggle schools.

Teaching magic: If we're lucky, it's what we all have and want to keep throughout our own storied careers.

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“How about a spell to get students to understand a difficult concept? ‘Comprendo!’”

not lie" with his own blood, but look what she did to teachers! Did J.K. Rowling delve into a teacher's worst nightmares the night before a scheduled observation to conjure up Umbridge's despicable behavior? Her irritating throat-clearing ("hem hem"), her interrupting questions, her clipboard writing, her total lack of understanding of best teaching practices—outrageous! She was the perfect villain both students and teachers could despise.