

Do Judge A Book By Its Back Cover
(Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone)
By Peter Kenneth

As collectors and fans of the Harry Potter books, it is important to be informed and cautious when making purchases. As Mad-Eye Moody warns, "Constant vigilance!!" While vigilance is important when purchasing all books, this article will address the specific concerns related to the unethical handling and sale of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

Unethical conduct occurs when a forger obtains two books: a paperback first printing and a hardcover second printing. The copyright page and page 53 (see first printing issue points) are then removed from the paperback first printing and are placed into the hardcover second printing. With this maneuver, the forger is able to present a counterfeit hardcover first printing. It is common for hardcover first printing copies to sell for \$25,000.00 to \$50,000.00. Unfortunately, in this situation, the forger has invested approximately \$7,000.00 in two authentic editions and then created a false hardcover first printing that brings a sizeable, yet dishonest profit.

Misconduct also occurs when the forger removes the cover of a worn paperback first printing of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and then replaces it with the cover of a second, third, fourth, or fifth paperback printing of the book. The forger has created a good condition counterfeit first printing and, in doing so, has increased their profit from \$1,000.00 to \$5,000.00.

In my search to validate that these mishandlings have occurred, I discovered two important printing errors. These errors now serve as a roadblock to forgers and provide an easy method to identify existing forgeries. With this knowledge and in using these authentication tools, it is clear that there are many counterfeit "first printings" that have slipped through eBay, auction houses, and private sales as falsely identified authentic first printings.

Prior to my discovery of these additional first printing issue points, it was believed that the first two hardcover printing covers were identical and that the first five paperback printing covers were identical, which made the discussed unethical handling of these books possible. The truth, however, is that there are two errors on the back cover of both the hardcover and paperback first printings. The first error is a misspelling of the word Philosopher's, which appears as "Philospher's." The second error is the switching of the words Witchcraft and Wizardry, which appear as "Wizardry and Witchcraft."

These two additional issue points are helpful tools in maintaining constant vigilance and monitoring integrity in the world of buying, selling, and trading of the first printing of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. In the case of this first printing, may you always judge this book by its back cover.

First Printing Issue Points

Copyright page:

1. The number line on the copyright page reads: 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
2. The full name, Joanne Rowling, is printed
3. The cover illustration copyright is printed as Thomas Taylor1997 with no space between Taylor and 1997

Book:

1. The phrase "1 wand" is listed twice on the "Other Equipment" list found on page 53

Front cover:

1. The cover includes a quote that reads "A terrific read and a stunning first novel" Wendy Cooling

Back cover:

1. The word "Philosopher's" is misspelled as "Philospher's"
2. The words "Witchcraft and Wizardry" are switched and printed as "Wizardry and Witchcraft"
3. The illustration is that of a young Dumbledore rather than the later illustration of the older Dumbleldore