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Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality

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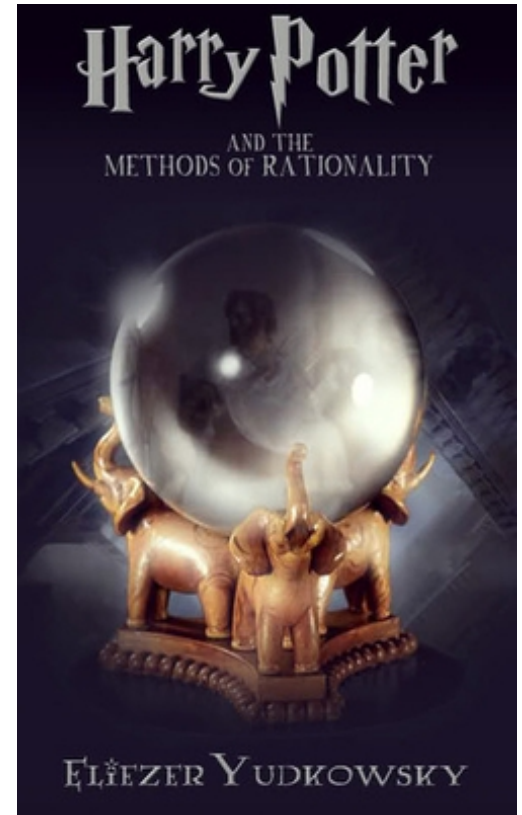
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Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality (**HPMOR**) is a work of [Harry Potter fan fiction](#) by [Eliezer Yudkowsky](#) published on [FanFiction.Net](#) as a [serial](#) from February 28, 2010^[1] to March 14, 2015,^[2] totaling 122 chapters and over 660,000 words.^{[3][4]} It adapts the story of *Harry Potter* to explain complex concepts in [cognitive science](#), [philosophy](#), and the [scientific method](#).^[5] Yudkowsky's reimagining supposes that Harry's aunt [Petunia Evans](#) married an [Oxford](#) professor and [homeschooled](#) Harry in science and [rational thinking](#),^{[2][4]} allowing Harry to enter the magical world with ideals from the [Age of Enlightenment](#) and an experimental spirit.^[6] The fan fiction spans one year, covering Harry's first year at Hogwarts.^[7] *HPMOR* has inspired other works of fan fiction, art, and poetry,^[8] is connected to the contemporary [rationalist community](#), and is popular among rationalists and [effective altruists](#).^{[9][10][11]}

Plot [\[edit\]](#)

In this fan fiction's alternate *Harry Potter* series universe, Lily Potter magically made her sister, Petunia Evans, more beautiful, allowing her to marry [Oxford](#) professor Michael Verres. When their nephew Harry James Potter is orphaned, they adopt him as Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and [homeschool](#) him in science and rationality. When Harry turns 11, Petunia and Professor McGonagall reveal the wizarding world and Harry's defeat of Lord Voldemort to him and

Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality



Author	Eliezer Yudkowsky
Language	English
Genre	Harry Potter fan fiction , hard fantasy
Publication date	28 February 2010 – 14 March 2015
Publication place	United States
Media type	Digital serial
Website	hpmor.com 

Michael. Harry becomes irritated over the wizarding society's inconsistencies and backwardness. When traveling to [Hogwarts](#), Harry becomes distanced from Ron Weasley and befriends Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger.

At Hogwarts, the [Sorting Hat](#) sends Harry and Hermione to Ravenclaw and Draco to Slytherin. As school begins, Harry comes into conflict with the faculty, befriends Professor Quirrell over their shared dispositions, and analyzes magic through the [scientific method](#) with Draco and Hermione. His efforts get Draco to question his discriminatory ideology towards [Muggle-borns](#) and allow Harry to invent partial [Transfiguration](#), which transmutes parts of wholes by applying [timeless physics](#). Quirrell starts a school program involving student armies, embroiling Harry, Hermione, and Draco in further conflict.

After winter break, Quirrell procures a [Dementor](#) to teach students the [Patronus charm](#). Though Hermione and Harry initially fail, Harry recognizes Dementors as shadows of [death](#) and invents the True Patronus charm, destroying the Dementor. After Harry teaches him to cast a regular Patronus, Draco discovers Harry can speak [Parseltongue](#) and alleges to him that Dumbledore murdered his mother. Quirrell reveals himself as a snake [Animagus](#) to Harry and convinces him to help spirit a supposedly manipulated Bellatrix Black from [Azkaban](#), leaving her in hiding and causing Headmaster Dumbledore to believe that Voldemort had returned.

Later, after several bullying incidents, Hermione establishes the student organization S.P.H.E.W. to protest misogyny in heroism and fight bullies, causing widespread chaos. Suddenly, she gets accused of attempting to murder Draco; Harry pays Lucius Malfoy, Draco's father, to prevent her from being sentenced to Azkaban, and Lucius withdraws Draco from Hogwarts. Harry and Dumbledore's [Order of the Phoenix](#) theorize that Quirrell is David Monroe, a long-missing opponent of Voldemort. Not long after, a mountain [troll](#) enters Hogwarts and kills Hermione before Harry manages to slay it. Grieving, Harry vows to [resurrect](#) Hermione and negotiates with Lucius, absolving the Malfoys of guilt in her murder in exchange for Lucius returning his money, acknowledging her innocence, and returning Draco to Hogwarts.

Near the end of the year, Harry discovers Quirrell drinking [unicorn](#) blood, supposedly to delay death from a health condition. A month later, Quirrell tricks and captures Harry, revealing himself as Voldemort's spirit possessing Quirrell and how he framed and murdered Hermione. He coerces Harry into helping him steal the [Philosopher's Stone](#), which can make temporary transmutations permanent, from [a magical mirror](#) in Hogwarts, by promising to resurrect Hermione in exchange. After they succeed, Dumbledore appears and tries to seal Voldemort outside [time](#); Voldemort endangers Harry, forcing Dumbledore to seal himself instead.

Voldemort's spirit abandons Quirrell and uses the Stone to incarnate himself; he and Harry resurrect Hermione, whose body Harry had stolen and preserved, using the Stone and Harry's True Patronus. Voldemort murders Quirrell as a [human sacrifice](#) for a magical [ritual](#) to give Hermione a [Horcrux](#) and the magic of a mountain troll and unicorn, rendering her near-[immortal](#). Knowing that [prophecy](#) foretells that Harry endangers the world, Voldemort summons Lucius and his other [Death Eaters](#), forces Harry to swear an [Unbreakable Vow](#) never to risk destroying the world, and orders his murder. Harry quickly improvises an attack using partial Transfiguration that kills every Death Eater and incapacitates Voldemort, whom he

memory-wipes and transfigures into his ring's jewel. He claims the Stone and stages a scene to make people believe that "David Monroe" died defeating Voldemort and resurrected Hermione.

After the battle, McGonagall gives Dumbledore's letters to Harry, who learns from them that prophecies had convinced Dumbledore to gamble the future of the world's peoples on him and bequeath his positions and assets to him. Harry helps a grieving Draco find his mother, Narcissa, and plans with the resurrected Hermione to overhaul wizarding society by destroying Azkaban using the True Patronus and employing the Philosopher's Stone to grant everyone immortality.

History [edit]

Yudkowsky wrote *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* as a medium to promote the [rationalist community](#) and skills he advocates on his community blog, [LessWrong](#).^{[11][12][13]} According to him, "I'd been reading a lot of *Harry Potter* fan fiction at the time the plot of *HPMOR* spontaneously burped itself into existence inside my mind, so it came out as a *Harry Potter* story, [...] If I had to rationalize it afterward, I'd say the Potterverse is a very rich environment for a curious thinker, and there's a large number of potential readers who would enter at least moderately familiar with the Harry Potter universe."^[1]

Yudkowsky has used *HPMOR* to solicit donations for the [Center for Applied Rationality](#), which teaches courses based on his work.^{[1][14]}

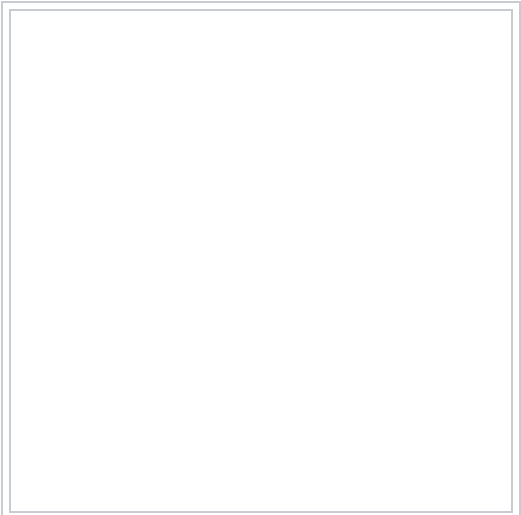
Yudkowsky refused a suggestion from David Whelan to sell *HPMOR* as an original story after rewriting it to remove the *Harry Potter* setting's elements from it to avoid [copyright infringement](#), as [E. L. James](#) did with *Fifty Shades*, which was originally a *Twilight* fan fiction, saying, "That's not possible in this case. *HPMOR* is fundamentally linked to, and can only be understood against the background of, the original Harry Potter novels. Numerous scenes are meant to be understood in the light of other scenes in the original HP."^[1]

After *HPMOR* concluded in 2015, Yudkowsky's readers celebrated by holding worldwide wrap parties.^[1]

Reception [edit]

Critical response [edit]

Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality is highly popular on [FanFiction.Net](#), though it has also caused significant polarization among readers. In 2011, Daniel D. Snyder of *The Atlantic* recorded how *HPMOR* "caused uproar in the fan fiction community, drawing both condemnations and praise" on online message boards "for its blasphemous—or brilliant—treatment of the canon."^[15] In 2015, David Whelan of *Vice* described *HPMOR* as "the most popular Harry Potter book you've never heard of" and claimed, "Most people agree that it's brilliantly written, challenging, and—curiously—mind altering."^[1]



HPMOR has received positive mainstream reception. [Hugo Award](#)-winning science fiction author [David Brin](#) positively reviewed

Yudkowsky giving a talk at [Stanford University](#)

HPMOR for [The Atlantic](#) in 2010, saying, "It's a terrific series, subtle and dramatic and stimulating... I wish all Potter fans would go here, and try on a bigger, bolder and more challenging tale."^[15] In 2014, American politician [Ben Wikler](#) lauded *HPMOR* on [The Guardian](#) as "the #1 fan fiction series of all time," saying it was "told with enormous gusto, and with emotional insight into that kind of mind," and comparing Harry to his friend [Aaron Swartz](#)'s skeptical attitude.^[16] Writing for [The Washington Post](#), legal scholar [William Baude](#) praised *HPMOR* as "the best Harry Potter book ever written, though it is not written by [J.K. Rowling](#)" in 2014^[17] and "one of my favorite books written this millennium" in 2015.^[2] In 2015, Vakasha Sachdev of [Hindustan Times](#) described *HPMOR* as "a thinking person's story about magic and heroism" and discussed how "the conflict between good and evil is represented as a battle between knowledge and ignorance," eliciting his praise.^[7] In 2017, Carol Pinchefskey of [Syfy](#) lauded *HPMOR* as "something brilliant" and "a platform on which the writer bounces off complex ideas in a way that's accessible and downright fun."^[8] In a 2019 interview for [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), young adult writer [Lili Wilkinson](#) said that she adores *HPMOR*; according to her, "It not only explains basically all scientific theory, from economics to astrophysics, but it also includes the greatest scene where Malfoy learns about DNA and has to confront his pureblood bigotry."^[4] Rhys McKay hailed *HPMOR* in a 2019 article for [Who](#) as "one of the best fanfics ever written" and "a familiar yet all-new take on the Wizarding world."^[18]

In his 2012 book [Singularity Rising](#), James D. Miller, an economics professor at [Smith College](#) and one of Yudkowsky's acquaintances, praised *HPMOR* as an "excellent marketing strategy" for Yudkowsky's "pseudoscientific-sounding" views due to its carefully crafted lessons about rationality. While he criticized Yudkowsky as "profoundly arrogant" for believing that making people more rational would make them more agreeable to his ideas, he nonetheless agreed that such an effort would gain him more followers.^[12]

Accolades [[edit](#)]

The fan audiobook for *HPMOR* was a finalist in the [Parsec Awards](#) in 2012 and 2015.^{[19][20]}

Translations [[edit](#)]

Russian [[edit](#)]

On July 17, 2018, Mikhail Samin, a former head of the Russian [Pastafarian](#) Church who had previously published [The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster](#) in Russian,^[21] launched a non-commercial [crowdfunding](#) campaign hosted on [Planeta.ru](#) alongside about 200 helpers to print a three-volume edition of the [Russian](#) translation^[22] of *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*.^[21] Lin Lobaryov, the former lead editor of [Mir Fantastiki](#), compiled the books.^[23] Samin's campaign reached its 1.086 million ₺ (approximately US\$17 000) goal within 30 hours;^[24] it ended on September 30 with 11.4 million ₺ collected (approximately US\$175 000), having involved 7,278 people, and became the biggest Russian crowdfunding project for a day before a fundraiser hosted on CrowdRepublic for the Russian translation for [Gloomhaven](#) surpassed it.^[21]

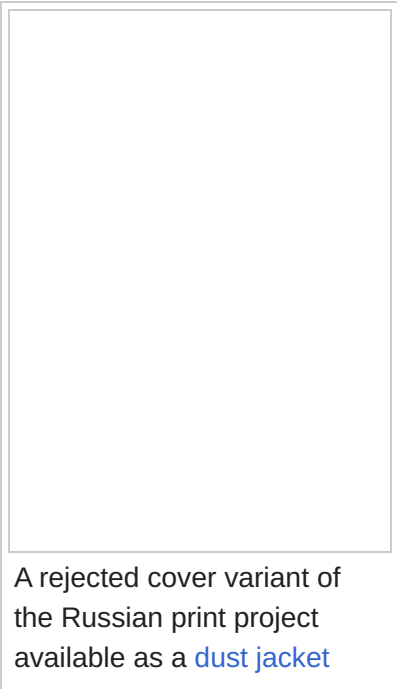
Though Samin originally planned to print 1000 copies of *HPMOR*, his campaign's unprecedented success led him to print twenty-one times more copies than that. Yudkowsky supported Samin's efforts and wrote an exclusive introduction for *HPMOR*'s Russian printing, though the campaign's popularity surprised him.^[21] Samin's *HPMOR* publication project is the largest-scale effort on record,^[25] surpassing many previous low-circulation fan printings,^[23] and he sent some Russian copies of *HPMOR* to libraries and others to schools as prizes for Olympiad winners.^{[21][25]} J.K. Rowling and her agents refused Russian publishing house Eksmo's request for commercial publication of *HPMOR*.^[21]

Other [[edit](#)]

HPMOR has [Chinese](#),^[26] [Czech](#),^[27] [French](#),^[28] [German](#),^[29] [Hebrew](#),^[30] [Indonesian](#),^[31] [Italian](#),^[32] [Japanese](#),^[33] [Latvian](#),^[34] [Norwegian](#),^[35] [Spanish](#),^[36] [Swedish](#),^[37] and [Ukrainian](#)^[38] translations.

See also [[edit](#)]

- [All the Young Dudes](#)
- [Harry Potter in Calcutta](#)
- [Hogwarts School of Prayer and Miracles](#)
- [My Immortal](#)



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External links [edit]

- Official website 
- The Methods of Rationality Podcast* (Full cast audiobook available as a podcast)

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