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**Translating Wordplay: Schoolboy Humor**

**Stalactite/Stalagmite:**

In Chapter 5 of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* . . . As Hagrid and Harry hurtle through the vaults of Gringott’s bank, plunging deeper and deeper, and then past an underground lake, Harry notes the huge stalactites and stalagmites . . .

“I never know,” Harry called to Hagrid over the noise of the cart, “What’s the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite?”

“Stalagmite’s got an ‘m’ in it,” said Hagrid. ‘An don’ ask me questions just now, I think I’m gonna be sick.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese (simplified characters)</th>
<th>Chinese (traditional characters)</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stalactite</td>
<td>钟乳石 zhōngrǔ-shí 'hanging-bell nipple rock'</td>
<td>钟乳石 zhōngrǔ-shí 'hanging-bell nipple rock'</td>
<td>鍾乳石 shōnyū-seki 'hanging-bell nipple rock'</td>
<td>măng đá 'rock bamboo-shoot' (= 'bamboo-shoot rock')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalagmite</td>
<td>石笋 shí-sǔn 'rock bamboo-shoot'</td>
<td>石筍 shí-sūn 'rock bamboo-shoot'</td>
<td>石筍 sekijun 'rock bamboo-shoot'</td>
<td>măng dá 'rock bamboo-shoot' (= 'bamboo-shoot rock')</td>
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**Chinese (Taiwanese):** ‘鐘乳石 zhōngrūshí is made up of three characters.’  
**Japanese version:** ‘One’s got three characters, the other’s got two.’  
**Vietnamese version:** ‘Măng is longer than vú.’

**Uranus:**

At Chapter 13 in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Lavender Brown squeals excitedly:

‘Oh, Professor, look! I think I’ve got an unaspected planet! Oooh, which one’s that, Professor?’

Professor Trelawney peers down at her chart and says:

‘It is Uranus, my dear.’

Unable to resist the opportunity, Ron pipes up: ‘Can I have a look at Uranus, too, Lavender?’
International Editing

Task 1:
You are a book editor from the United States, and it is your task to make the Harry Potter books accessible to American children. What parts of the following passage would you adapt? Remember, you must try to retain the uniquely British elements of the text while also making the books marketable to American kids. (After completing this task, you can compare your choices with the actual American editor’s choices, see below)

After one of the Slytherin team deliberately rams Harry’s broom, the muggle-born boy Dean Thomas is very excited:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British, first edition</th>
<th>As Adapted in the first American edition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Down in the stands, Dean Thomas was yelling, “Send him off, ref! Red card!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“But this isn’t football, Dean,” Ron reminded him.</td>
<td>“What are you talking about, Dean?” said Ron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You can’t send people off in Quidditch—and what’s a red card?”</td>
<td>“Red card!” said Dean furiously. “In soccer you get shown the red card and you’re out of the game!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But Hagrid was on Dean’s side.</td>
<td>“But this isn’t soccer, Dean,” Ron reminded him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They oughta change the rules, Flint coulda knocked Harry outta the air.” (HPPS 138)</td>
<td>Hagrid, however, was on Dean’s side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They oughta change the rules. Flint coulda knocked Harry outta the air.” (HPST 188)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Task 2:
Assume that you are an editor from a European nation—what might you change in the following passages? Now, assume that you an editor from a non-European nation—you are creating a Taiwanese or a Ugandan version. What might you need to alter?

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Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. There were the last people you’d expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn’t hold with such nonsense. (Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone 7)

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On Friday, no fewer than twelve letters arrived for Harry. As they couldn’t go through the letter-box they had been pushed under the door, slotted through the sides and a few even forced through the small window in the downstairs toilet.

Uncle Vernon stayed at home again. After burning all the letters, he got out a hammer and nails and boarded up the cracks around the front and back doors so no one could go ut. He hummed “Tiptoe through the Tulips” as he worked, and jumped at small noises. (HPPS 34)
They reached King’s Cross at half past ten. Uncle Vernon dumped Harry’s trunk on to a trolley and wheeled it into the station for him. Harry thought this was strangely kind until Uncle Vernon stopped dead, facing the platforms with a nasty grin on his face. (HPPS 68)

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HOGWARTS SCHOOLS OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Set Books
All Students should have a copy of each of the following:
- The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1) by Miranda Goshawk
- A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot
- Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling
- A Beginners’ Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch
- One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore
- Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger
- Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander
- The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble

Useful Website Resources

See http://www.eulenfeder.de/int/gbint.html for comparisons of Harry Potter translations in multiple world language, including the major European ones. This website contains (among many other interesting items) a listing of over 100 characters from the six Harry Potter books, and it identifies how different international editions have chosen to adapt these names.

www.fanfiction.net contains over a million creative writing efforts of individuals, primarily teenagers, who have created story-line continuations and alternative versions of well-known literary texts.

See http://www.cjvlang.com/Hpotter/ for Harry Potter books as translated (and mistranslated) into Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese. This site is the source of the above materials on “school boy” humor.

See http://home.comcast.net/~helenajole/Harry.html for a comparison of British/American texts.

See http://www.radosh.net/writing/potter.html for a transcript of a 1999 New Yorker article that interviews the American editor regarding his work with Rowling to create an accessible American text.
Useful Research

