

Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

WITH THE KIDS

Harry appears!

Well, almost. Friday night kids everywhere will stay up late for the latest Harry Potter book.

By Brenda Rees
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This weekend, an estimated 4 million people at about 5,000 locales across the country will celebrate a mere child with late-night parties, films, games, look-alike contests and a 672-page book that will keep readers of all ages burning the midnight oil.

The child is not even real. It's Harry Potter, the subject of more than 270 million books in print worldwide.

And while the average muggle can complain about all the fanfare for a literary character, some suggest that what we need is a good pint of butterbeer and a handful of Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans to change our minds.

Or maybe we should join other wizard wannabes at one of the numerous midnight release parties Friday in anticipation of "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," the sixth book in the series from author J.K. Rowling.

"It's an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime event," says Trish Lawrence, operations manager at Borders who has been involved in the last three Potter parties at the Torrance store.

The only other event that comes close to the frenzy surrounding Potter books, says Lawrence, was when author Daniel Handler came to read and sign his Lemony Snicket books. "He mesmerized about 2,500 kids, and we had people with little kids here until 4 a.m.," she says. "There was an air of electricity and excitement here that would never be matched. It was also one of those unrepeatable things."

Kids are "champing at the bit" for the new Potter book, says Lisa Palombi, children's librarian at the Edendale Branch Library in Los Angeles, which will host a Potter party on Saturday morning. "It's miraculous that the kids' attention has kept up through the years," she says. "It is still cool to read Potter, no matter if you are now a teenager."

"For me, as a librarian who has read all kinds of children's literature, [Potter] books certainly do hearken to other titles, such as works from Susan Cooper, Floyd Anderson and even C.S. Lewis. They are meaty books with great vocabulary and imagination."

It won't take much to get Potter fans all revved up for the release — Southland locales are predicting record-breaking turnouts for various Potter events.

At the Aero Theatre in Santa Monica this weekend, a movie marathon includes screenings of each of the three Harry Potter films.

After Friday's 8 p.m. showing of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," folks can walk across the street to Every Picture Tells a Story for a pajama party with snacks and games while counting down to midnight.

Over in Burbank, the Barnes & Noble bookstore will be transformed into a magic village and wizard school where kids can take classes in magical creatures and divination; members of the Sidewalk Astronomers will lead astronomy workshops.

The actual Sorting Hat prop from the Warner Bros. movie will point partygoers to where to begin exploring the various activities at Storyopolis in Studio City. In this Hogwarts-inspired locale, kids can make their own wizard/witch hats, enjoy a strolling magician and work on a giant crossword puzzle. Prints from Potter artist Mary GrandPré will also be on display.

Borders in Torrance hopes to face-paint a lightning bolt on every kid's forehead and engage them with word games, dragon mask making and even a taste-testing contest of Bertie Bott's Beans. Costumed staff will mill the store spouting Potter-esque greetings.

Chocolate frogs, slithery live critters and fortunetelling await guests at Imagine That in Riverside, which is creating an in-store Diagon Alley. The party — only for those who have pre-purchased the book — will also host young wizard games such as Brooms and Balls.

For kids who can't stay up past 10 p.m., the breakfast party at Mrs. Nelson's Toy and Book Store in La Verne might just be the ticket. Hogwarts students will assist guests in games and word puzzles as well as three tasks based on the "Goblet of Fire" book: relay races on brooms around a dragon's head, a treasure hunt in a seabed and a stumbling good time inside a giant in-store maze.

Also, Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena will host a Saturday morning party complete with trivia games, refreshments and giveaways.

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Hop on your brooms

Southern California will welcome the latest chapter in Harry Potter's education with a variety of wizarding activities at bookstores, libraries and theaters. Local Borders, Barnes & Noble, Waldenbooks and Wal-Marts are also planning late evening parties on Friday with face painting, mask and wand making, science experiments and magic crafts. Check individual stores for times.

Friday

- **Aero Theatre**, 8 p.m. "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica. Stroll through a Potter marketplace in the lobby. \$9 for adults, \$7 for students and seniors. (310) 260-1528.
- **Barnes & Noble Burbank**, 6 p.m., 731 N. San Fernando Road, Burbank. Magic village and wizard school. (818) 558-1383.
- **Blue Chair Children's Books**, 9 p.m., 177 N. Glendora Ave., Glendora. Trivia, snacks and a costume contest. (626) 335-8630.
- **Compass Books**, 11 p.m., 325 W. Cerritos Ave., Anaheim. Take a Potter quiz, get tattooed and play games like Count the Number of Bertie Bott's Beans. (714) 502-9999.
- **Dutton's**, 11 p.m., 447 N. Cañon Drive, Beverly Hills, and 11975 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood. Costume contest and giveaways. Beverly Hills: (310) 281-0997; Brentwood: (310) 476-6263.
- **Every Picture Tells a Story**, 10 p.m., 1311 Montana Ave., Santa Monica. Pajama party with snacks, stories and

giveaways. (310) 451-2700.

- **Imagine That**, 11 p.m., 5225 Canyon Crest, Riverside. While waiting for midnight in Diagon Alley, catch a chocolate frog, get your fortune read and pet a snake. (951) 784-0132.
- **Latitude 33 Books**, 11:30 p.m., 311 Ocean Ave., Laguna Beach. Friends of Harry meet for fun, food and a witching hour countdown. (949) 494-5403.
- **Once Upon a Story**, 11 p.m., 3740 E. 4th St., Long Beach. Games, Potter snacks and trivia contests. (562) 433-6856.
- **San Marino Toy & Book Shoppe**, midnight, 2424 Huntington Drive, San Marino. Books distributed by staff dressed in Potter-esque garb. (626) 309-0222.
- **Storyopolis**, 9 p.m., 12348 Ventura Blvd., Studio City. Follow the Sorting Hat to a potion class, piñatas, story time and jellybean giveaways. (818) 509-5600.
- **Sun Valley Library**, 4 p.m., 6935 Vineland Ave., Sun Valley. Potter magic show. (818) 764-1338.
- **Village Books**, midnight, 1049 Swarthmore Ave., Pacific Palisades. Poster contest entries decorate store windows. Have a swig of butterbeer. (310) 454-4063.
- **Whale of a Tale**, 11 p.m. 4199 Campus Drive, Suite A, Irvine. Magicians, contests and dry ice spookiness. (949) 854-8288.

Saturday

- **Aero Theatre**, 7:30 p.m., "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets." See Friday.
- **Edendale Library**, 11 a.m., 2011 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. Games, trivia and other Potter-inspired fun. (213) 207-3000.
- **Mrs. Nelson's Toy and Book Store**, 8 a.m. 1030 Bonita Ave., La Verne. Breakfast party with games and activities. (909) 599-4558.
- **Vroman's Bookstore**, 8 to 9 a.m., 695 E. Colorado Blvd. Breakfast, giveaways and a preview of the audio version. (626) 449-5320.
- **Whimsic Alley**, 11 a.m., 2717 1/2 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica. Double-decker bus, prizes, games, wands and other wizardry accessories. (310) 453-2370.

Sunday

- **Aero Theatre**, 5 p.m., "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban." See Friday

Tuesday

- **John Muir Library**, 3:30 p.m., 1005 W. 64th St., L.A. Magic show, games and trivia. (323) 789-4800.

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- **Storyopolis**, 7 p.m. British actor Jim Dale, the voice of the Potter audio books in the U.S., will read from the new book and discuss how he creates the voices. Free, but reservations required.