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Saturday Espresso Break

By [Bree Shirvell](#) | [Email the author](#) | July 16, 2011 |

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Saying Goodbye To Harry Potter

A Series That Pulled A Generation Together

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It was strange to stand outside of the cinema Thursday evening. Not because it was an hour before midnight—that would have been somewhat normal six months ago.

Rather it was strange not waiting for the final installment of the Harry Potter movies, but [covering the event](#) for Stonington-Mystic Patch. It's a bit like watching a film of a younger version of yourself, and yet as I photographed and spoke with those waiting to see the movie it was comforting to play the part of observer. I wasn't quite ready to say goodbye to Harry, Hermione, Ron and all the other characters that had leaped off the pages of books and out of screens filling my childhood.

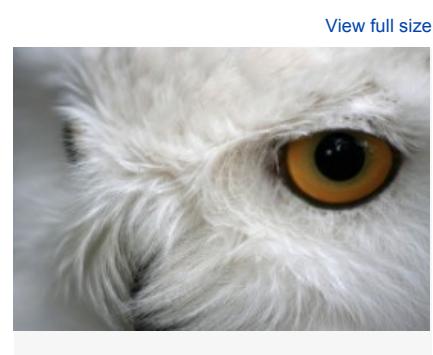
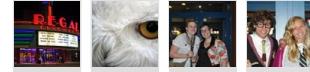
And no offense to all the teenagers, children and their parents who rushed to the theaters over the past day, but Harry Potter really belongs to us. To us 25-year-olds who were the same age as Harry when the first book was published. To us 20-somethings who just like Harry saw his teenager years divided into before everyone knew Voldemort was back and after; saw ours divided into what the world was like before and after 9/11. At a time and in a world that sought so hard to divide—the famous “you are either with us or against us” line comes to mind—Harry Potter pulled a generation together.

Summer evenings at [Bank Square Books](#) spent waiting in line for the next installment to come out. Followed by walking home on what always seemed a magical, starry, night with a group of friends and strangers bonded together in anticipation of the next part of the story. Knowing you wouldn't be the only one staying up to read as much as you could before falling asleep holding the book. A freshman college political science class with a young Ukrainian professor who related things in the terms of Harry Potter and no one needed to ask for an explanation. Debates about if the slightly different British version was better—I have the first four books in the British version plus the entire American set. Knowing that no matter where in the world you were there was someone who also knew about Quidditch, Hogwarts and Muggles.

Their world lived on the pages of the books, screens of the movies and in our heads. It was a place where you dreamed of getting your acceptance letter to Hogwarts, explored the hallways and grounds, learned to play Quidditch and of course practiced magic.

It was never a happily ever after tale. Along the journey the characters we fell in love with suffered, lost friends and asked very adult questions about good and evil and right and wrong. But so did we in both Harry Potter and life.

Now, more than 14 years later, the story comes to end and yet the shared experiences continue. As I spoke with people outside Regal Cinemas in Pawcatuck, Amanda Winslow, 28, of Mystic mentioned how she hoped this time they got the projector started on time. We laughed realizing we both had been to the midnight showing a couple of years ago and stuck in the theater that was unable to play the movie for over an hour due to a projector issue. Regal Cinemas offered to let people go and

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refund their money; I don't think anyone left. It's those stories, those tales of what we did for Harry Potter that still bind us.

At the end there's no magical ending that fixes everything but there is the sense that all will be right. That Harry and the others, now adults, are setting off onto a new slightly less exciting and less dangerous adventure. So, I guess it was fitting not to rush to the theater to watch the movie but rather to cover the story. It's part of growing up, part of the next adventure, but we'll always have Harry.

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About this column: *Musings over espresso and other thoughts on the happenings in Stonington, Pawcatuck and Mystic.*