

KARINA BLAND

Did 'Harry Potter' series encourage kids to read? In our house, it was like magic

Karina Bland The Republic | azcentral.com

Published 6:00 a.m. MT Nov. 20, 2018

Karina Bland is on vacation. This column was originally published July 22, 2007:

We were among the crazy people who dressed up and camped out in a bookstore on Friday night to get the last book in the Harry Potter series, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows."

My 8-year-old, Sawyer, was dressed as Mad-Eye Moody, a dark-wizard chaser. His sister, Savannah, 14, wore blue witch robes.

I wore my "I'm hot for the Weasley twins" T-shirt.

The Borders store in downtown Tempe was swarming with wizards and witches. We had our fortunes told, made construction-paper wizard hats and watched a spelling bee of wizarding words.

In the costume contest, Sawyer dragged one leg, sneered at the crowd and took a deep swig from the root beer bottle he carried. The Potter fans in the store went wild. He took second place.

As a prize, we moved from 188th in line to the No. 5 spot.

I hadn't stayed up all night for something like this since I stood in line for Rolling Stones tickets in 1981. But the excitement was contagious.

Strangers stopped me to demand whether I thought Snape was friend or foe. People dressed as Professor Umbridge and Luna Lovegood posed good-naturedly for photos. Sawyer signed autographs.

At midnight, we joined the countdown and jumped up and down when the boxes of books were opened. Savannah had tears in her eyes. She hugged her copy.

We got home at 1 a.m., and Sawyer begged me to read, please, just one chapter. Savannah read until her eyes blinked closed at about 2 a.m.

In the hype leading up to the release of the book, there was debate about the effect of the Harry Potter series on young people's reading habits: Are more kids reading because of the books?

I know it has worked in our house. I hope the magic is enough to last a lifetime.

Reach Bland at karina.bland@arizonarepublic.com or 602-444-8614. Read more at karinabland.azcentral.com.

READ MORE FROM KARINA BLAND:

- Don't be a goober! Help others during Season for Sharing
- Photographer captures the faces and the love on National Adoption Day
- 'Cold snap' has Arizonans powering down ceiling fans and pulling on sweatshirts
- Marines show up at a south Phoenix bar for the kid of a Marine who needs them