

Harry Potter Star Stories

Harry Potter character information is printed in green.

Star and Constellation information is printed in blue.

Introduction

Many of the Harry Potter characters' names come from the sky. Here is some background on some of those characters and their namesakes.

Sirius Black

Many of the characters we will talk about today are part of the Black family. Many members of this family are known as "The Most Noble and Ancient House of Black." The Black family were advocates of pure blood (i.e. no muggles or mudbloods) and many were involved with the Dark Arts.

Point out the star Sirius.

- Harry's godfather. He was imprisoned in Azkaban after being falsely accused of betrayal and murder.
- He is an animagus (someone who can transform into a particular animal at will. Sirius takes the form of a black dog.
- Sirius is also called the Dog Star because it is part of the constellation Canis Major (the big dog) and follows the hunter Orion across the sky.

The Star Sirius

- 8.6 light years away, second brightest star in the sky. 17,000 degrees Fahrenheit surface temperature. (our Sun is about 10,000)
- Its appearance in the east foretold the rising of the river Nile to the Egyptians.
- Also called dog star (Canis Major). When Sirius rises close to the Sun, it was believed that the two caused hotter weather since Sirius was so bright; hence, "Dog days of summer."
- Sometimes called the rainbow star because it flickers with many colors. Sometimes people report it as a UFO. Really—appears low in the sky and its light passes through a long column of air before it reaches our eyes. Changes in density and temperature of this air affect the light. Happens in other stars too but more noticeable in Sirius because it is so bright.

Regulus Arcturus Black

- Sirius's younger brother.
- Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation Leo.

- Regulus was a death eater (one of Voldemort's followers) but he had a change of heart when he saw first hand what the Dark Lord was doing.
- He is best known in the Harry Potter world for his courageous self-sacrifice. Regulus lost his life in the process of stealing one of Voldemort's horcruxes (a piece of Voldemort's soul). He gave the locket to his house elf, Kreacher, so that it could be destroyed.

Regulus the Star

- Five times bigger than Sun. (our sun is about 1 million miles wide). 85 light years from Earth.
- Regulus means "the little king." In the ancient world, it was believed that this star made a contribution towards the heat of summer.
- In Chinese zodiac, the stars of Leo were said to represent a horse.
- Regulus is near the heart of the lion.

Orion Black

- The father of Sirius and Regulus.
- He married his second cousin, Walburga Black.
- Orion lived at 12 Grimmauld Place which became headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix.
- Orion and his wife, like many members of the Black family, believed strongly in blood purity. They disowned their son Sirius when he expressed different views, leading to Sirius moving in with the Potter family and Walburga burning his name off the family tapestry when he was 16 years old.

Orion the Hunter Constellation

- One of the most recognizable constellations around the world. Seen from almost all over the world because of its location on the celestial equator.
- Big hunter—has two hunting dogs following him as he pursues Taurus the bull. Lepus the hare is just below his feet.
- In Australia, belt and sword are called the saucepan. Africans and French sometimes call the three stars of the belt the three kings.
- Orion Nebula--stellar nursery that has been known to many different cultures throughout human history. The nebula is only 1,500 light-years away, making it the closest large star-forming region to Earth

Bellatrix Lestrange

- One of the most loyal members of Voldemort's inner circle.
- Her most famous crimes include the murdering of her cousin, Sirius Black, and torturing the aurors Frank and Alice Longbottom (Neville's parents).

- Bellatrix is the name of the star that represents the constellation Orion's other armpit, which is sometimes known as "the Amazon star." (Betelgeuse, the star that represents the armpit on the left, is literally translated as "armpit.")
- Bellatrix is Latin for "female warrior."

Bellatrix the Star

- 240 light years away. Six times the diameter of the Sun.
- 27th brightest star in the sky.
- Means "female warrior" in Latin.

Now, we'll enter the northern sky, which can be seen all year long from the Northern Hemisphere.

Draco Malfoy

- Bellatrix Lestrange is Draco's aunt. His mother, Narcissa, is Bellatrix's sister.
- Draco is Harry's nemesis at Hogwarts, always trying to undermine him and get him into trouble.
- Draco, Lucius and Narcissa serve Lord Voldemort.
- Draco became a Death Eater when Voldemort assigned him the task of getting a group of Death Eaters into Hogwarts and murdering Albus Dumbledore.
- The constellation Draco is a dragon. In Latin, Draco means "large serpent."
- Draco is a Slytherin. The constellation Draco *slithers* around the Big and Little Dippers like a serpent.

Draco the Dragon Constellation

- Thuban star (in Draco, between the two dippers) was once pole star 3500 years BC (over 5000 years ago). It is about 215 light years away. In several more thousand years, Vega will be the pole star. This is due to the earth's wobble on its axis.
- Several stories from other cultures about this constellation--
- Greek legend: horrible dragon that guarded a sacred spring and slew the soldiers of Cadmus who had been sent to gather water. (Draco is seen between the two dippers, still possibly guarding the water that the two dipper cups are holding!)
- Chinese legend: dragon eats Sun or Moon in an eclipse. During an eclipse ancient Chinese would bang on pots and pans and try to scare away the dragon.
- Around 800 BC, it is thought that the prehistoric Adena people who lived in the Ohio area of the US created Serpent Mound to mirror the constellation Draco. It is nearly a quarter mile long.

Arcturus

- Middle name of Regulus Arcturus Black

- 4th brightest star in the sky. Part of the constellation Bootes, which means herdsman or plowman (but it looks like an ice cream cone).
- “Arc to Arcturus” to find the star from the Big Dipper’s handle.
- 215 times as bright as the Sun. 37 light years away. Sirius is 3 ½ times brighter than Arcturus.
- Known as the bear watcher, because it follows the Big Bear around the North Star. “Arc to Arcturus.”
- From Greek word Arktos, meaning bear.
- Old star—orange giant. In last stages of its normal life. 25 times the Sun’s diameter.
- Show size comparison of Arcturus to other stars

Tell story of Orion and Scorpius

Orion threatened to kill all the animals in the world, so the gods sent the scorpion to stop him. The scorpion bit Orion and killed him. Therefore, Orion and Scorpius were placed in opposite ends of the sky so that they would never battle again. We see Scorpius in the southern summer sky and Orion travels across the winter sky.

So we move to the summer skies to see our final constellation, Scorpius.

Scorpius Malfoy

- In the epilogue of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, we learn that Draco has a son named Scorpius.
- Scorpius is in the same year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as Albus Potter, the son of Harry and Ginny, and Rose Weasley, the daughter of Ron and Hermione.
- The word Scorpius is Latin for scorpion.

Scorpius the Constellation

- One of the oldest constellations known—possibly one of the original six signs of the zodiac. One of the brightest of the larger constellations.
- Antares—rival of Mars (Ares is another name for Mars. Antares means “not Mars.” People confused it with Mars because it is so close to the ecliptic).
- Antares is also called the heart of the scorpion.
- Estimated to be 285-700 diameters of the Sun. 600 light years away.
- Show size comparison of Antares to other stars

To end our tour of the sky, we’ll go to our brightest night object, the Moon.

Luna Lovegood

- Luna means “of or pertaining to the moon” in Latin.
- Luna Lovegood is a Ravenclaw. She is the same age as Ron’s sister, Ginny.
- Luna is known for being bizarre. She has an unusual sense of fashion and has some peculiar beliefs that she has no qualms about sharing.
- Luna’s nickname is “Loony Lovegood.” The word “loony” is a slang word that means crazy. It comes from the word “lunatic” which comes from “luna.” This is because people used to think that sanity was affected by moon phases.

The Moon

- **Moon is $\frac{1}{4}$ the diameter of the Earth**
- **About 240,000 miles away (Mars is 34 million miles away)**
- **By car (70 mph) it would take you 135 days to get there; by rocket, 60-70 hours.**
- **Widest craters are 140 miles wide (here to Colorado Springs) and 15,000+ feet deep (Long’s Peak is over 14,000)**
- **50th anniversary of man’s first steps on the moon (July 20, 1969).**
- **Russia, Japan, China, European Space Agency, and India have all sent probes to the moon.**
- **Many cultures have seen faces in the moon. What do you see?**

Conclusion

For thousands of years, cultures and countries all over the world have had their own stories and myths about the stars and constellations. It is only appropriate that even today, we still find wonder in the stars by incorporating them into our stories. As you continue to read the tales of Harry Potter, don’t forget to look up into the skies at night and remember the adventures that have yet to be taken!