Special Occasion/ Commemorative Speech

7 books. 14 years. One incredible journey. The idea that came to one woman on a train has become a world-wide phenomenon that continues to capture the hearts and minds of millions. With remarkable creativity and imagination, these books bring to a life a new world filled with beloved characters and creatures. After only the first book, some readers couldn't help but hope to receive their own letter from Hogwarts confirming their hope that they were in fact wizards who would soon be studying within the magical walls of the mysterious castle. People became muggles and the idea of whole secret magical existence was born. The rare brilliance of the story attracts readers of all ages and made one simple name uniquely famous. Harry Potter. Few book series have been as powerful as Harry Potter and have reached such massive numbers of people across the globe. These fantasy novels have united generations with a love and appreciation for the magical world of Harry Potter. We are now taking this time to celebrate the epic book series that promises to draw in readers for years to come.

The end of an era is upon us, as the last of the movies have been released. People no longer have another book or movie to anxiously await and there is great sadness in this truth. Children grew up with these books and aged along with the beloved characters. Harry Potter is more than a book series. It is an unforgettable experience that spanned across years of many people's lives. Children became adults alongside Harry and his friends and they learned valuable lessons from the magical adventures throughout the books. The books encouraged reading in general by helping kids learn to enjoy reading and they even contributed to improved reading skills. I was fortunate enough to be the perfect age when the books started to come out and I felt a deep connection with the books as I followed the story for years. I can distinctly remember reading the first few books in elementary school and then excitedly waiting for the second half of the series to come out. Before each new book came out, I would re-read all the previous ones, causing me lose track of how many times I actually read them. The series became a passion of mine from an early age and my love for it continued to grow stronger with each book. Harry Potter gave me more than just a love for this one magical series. It fostered my love for reading which defined a big part of who I was growing up, and who I still am today. The benefits of this love for reading are extensive and I cannot imagine what I would have missed out on without it.

My sisters also benefitted from a love for reading and Harry Potter became a source of family bonding, which is incredibly valuable in itself. We were all huge fans of the series growing up and still are today. When we were younger, we would all be so excited for the release of each new book that we would fight over the book for the right to be the first one to read it. Eventually we resorted to buying multiple copies to satisfy us all. I have countless fond Harry Potter related memories that brought me close to my sisters and I can't begin to describe how important that was.

From listening to the books on tape during long car-rides to having our faces painted while waiting hours for the final book to be released, I will forever cherish the memories I owe to Harry Potter.

I was also brought closer to many friends because of Harry Potter. Luckily, I have always been able to find other fans as there are so many. My obsession for Harry Potter could have easily isolated me and kept potential friends away, as I am on the extreme end of the spectrum as far as fans go. I can remember constantly clutching my copy of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (the fourth book) when I was in fourth grade and reading it whenever I had the chance. This included during lunch, recess, and when I was on the bus, which was fairly unusual for kids that age, so it's safe to say that I wasn't headed towards any popularity. Fortunately I found people who were either fellow Harry Potter fans, or were just willing to deal with my obsession. Over the years, my friends and I would come up with Harry Potter games to play during school and even got other students interested in the series. The height of our passion (or madness, as others would call it) may have been in middle school when we gave people each their own Harry Potter character based on perceived similarities. While is started as a joke, it became surprising popular and other students began asking us to give them a character. It was very entertaining and we still enjoy laughing at the fun we had relating our lives to Harry's.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about Harry Potter is its brilliantly complex storyline. The series is a genius piece of literature that creates a new world that captivates readers and allows their imagination to soar to astonishing places. It is hard to believe that one person could think up this entire wizarding world and all of the intricacies of the plot, especially since the author began jotting down the tale on a napkin. All of the books tie into each other in clever and profound ways, making them each more meaningful and memorable. After reading the books several times, I am still amazed at how detailed and complicated they are (something that the movies could not possibly begin to convey). The books become increasingly dark and serious and they build to an unforgettable conclusion. It is fascinating to think that the epilogue of the final book was actually written before the first book even came out. This represents how the series really comes full circle and always had significant purpose.

Of course I cannot pay tribute to the Harry Potter series without praising the woman who created the magic. Author J.K. Rowling is a literary genius who brought to life a tale that enchanted readers and changed lives. It is easy to overlook the impact of books, especially during a time when reading seems to be becoming increasingly unappreciated. I am shocked and fairly horrified when I hear how many people claim to never read. However, this makes it even more important to celebrate books that truly inspire people to read and create a strong bond with readers.

Harry potter touched the hearts of many and the best way to honor this phenomenon is to describe how it affected me. Although I am only one of millions of people who became caught up in this magical world, my experiences reflect those of other loyal fans who were changed by the series. I am not the only one whose walls are adorned with Harry Potter posters, whose bed is covered in Harry Potter blankets and pillows and whose wardrobe includes numerous Harry Potter shirts. A theme park based entirely on the series even offers people the opportunity to experience the world of Harry Potter. This represents how important this franchise is to people, and how devoted they are to it. People don't just read these books. They become a part of something bigger that unites people. The level of devotion among fans is demonstrated in many ways, from Harry Potter tattoos, to kids being named after the books' characters. These all show how deeply people were touched by the books. Harry Potter is a series that will remain in people's hearts throughout their lives; one that will be re-read, re-watched, and passed down to future generations.