Hogwarts Houses and Personality: What Does Science Say?

Name Date Class

Reading

1 In the Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling, every new student at Hogwarts School must **belong** to one of four houses. A talking hat, the Sorting Hat, looks inside each student's mind and chooses a house. Harry asks the hat not to put him in Slytherin, and the hat listens. The school is **fictional**, but the series is real and has sold more than 600 million copies, according to its US publisher, Scholastic. Can a house tell you anything true about your personality?

2 Each house is known for different qualities. Gryffindor students are **brave**. Hufflepuff students are hard-working and **loyal**. Ravenclaw students are clever and **curious**, and Slytherin students are **ambitious** and good at getting what they want. Fans can find their own house with an official online quiz of ten questions about imaginary situations.

3 In 2015, Laura Crysel and her colleagues at Stetson University in the United States tested the quiz. They asked 236 fans for their quiz results and gave them personality tests. A **trait** is a part of your character, such as being friendly or shy. Some traits matched the houses. Hufflepuffs were friendlier and more helpful than fans in other houses. Ravenclaws enjoyed hard thinking more than the others. Slytherins scored higher on traits such as thinking only about themselves and using other people. But Gryffindors were only **slightly** more outgoing than the rest, and the researchers had no test for bravery.

4 A team in Europe (Jakob and colleagues, 2019) repeated the study with more people and found a similar **pattern**, but the differences were small. In 2025, researchers in Poland (Baran and colleagues) tested 677 adults. For the 578 people who had read the books, the quiz matched some traits. For the 99 people who had not read the books, most of the links disappeared. The researchers suggest that fans may see themselves through their favorite house. So the quiz can be fun, but it is not a real personality test.

5 Why do quiz results often feel so **accurate**? In an experiment published in 1949, the American psychologist Bertram Forer gave 39 students a personality test. A week later, each student received a personal description. On a scale from 0 to 5, the students gave it an average score of 4.26. In fact, every student got the same text, and most of it came from a book about star signs. This is called the Forer effect. People often believe **vague** sentences that could describe almost anyone.

6 Houses also turn people into teams. In studies published in 1970 and 1971, the Polish-born psychologist Henri Tajfel worked with schoolboys aged 14 and 15 in Bristol, England. He told the boys that they were in a group because they liked the same paintings. In fact, the groups were **random**. The boys did not know who was in their group, but they still gave more reward points to boys in their own group. Even a group with no real meaning can change how people **treat** others.

7 Real schools use houses, too. They are a **tradition** in the United Kingdom, and they have spread to countries such as Australia and New Zealand. One school in New Zealand names its houses after local trees, and one in Australia uses words from the local Darug language. Students usually join a house when they start school, not after a personality test. They **compete** for points in sports and other activities, and many schools say that houses help students feel part of a team. None of these studies has tested one question: does being in a house change who a child becomes?

Vocabulary Matching

Match each word from the reading with its meaning. Write the letter on the line.

1	**belong**	_____	**A**	not real; made up in a story
2	**fictional**	_____	**B**	behave toward someone in a certain way
3	**brave**	_____	**C**	a custom passed down over many years
4	**loyal**	_____	**D**	a regular way that things happen
5	**curious**	_____	**E**	a little; not very much
6	**ambitious**	_____	**F**	try to win against others
7	**trait**	_____	**G**	wanting to learn about things
8	**slightly**	_____	**H**	not afraid of danger
9	**pattern**	_____	**I**	a quality that is part of your character
10	**accurate**	_____	**J**	not clear and not exact
11	**vague**	_____	**K**	chosen by chance, without a plan
12	**random**	_____	**L**	always supporting a person or group
13	**treat**	_____	**M**	wanting to be very successful
14	**tradition**	_____	**N**	be a member of a group
15	**compete**	_____	**O**	correct and true in every detail

Fill in the Blank

Choose a word from the box to complete each sentence. Use each word once. The words are already in the correct form.

accurate	**ambitious**	**belong**	**brave**	**compete**	**curious**	**fictional**	**loyal**	**random**	**slightly**
tradition	**trait**	**treat**	**vague**						

1 I _____ to the school chess club.

2 Sherlock Holmes is a _____ detective.

3 The _____ firefighter saved the child.

4 Dogs are often _____ to their owners.

5 Young children are _____ about everything.

6 She is an _____ student who wants to be a doctor.

7 Honesty is an important _____ in a friend.

8 The shirt is _____ too big, but I can still wear it.

9 Is this map _____ ? It shows the wrong street.

10 The directions were too _____ , so we got lost.

11 The computer chose the winners in a _____ way.

12 You should _____ everyone with respect.

13 A big family dinner on holidays is a _____ in our home.

14 Twenty teams _____ in the school sports day.

Comprehension Questions

Answer in your notebook or discuss with a partner. Questions 10 to 12 are IELTS-style.

1 What does the Sorting Hat do in the Harry Potter books?

2 What does Harry ask the Sorting Hat, and what happens?

3 Which qualities is each house known for?

4 What did Laura Crysel's team do in 2015?

5 Which results in Crysel's study matched the houses, and which result was weak?

6 How were the results for readers and non-readers different in the Polish study?

7 What was Forer's trick, and what did it show?

8 What did the boys in Tajfel's study do, even though the groups were random?

9 How is joining a house in a real school different from joining a house at Hogwarts?

IELTS-Style Questions

10 **True, False, or Not Given:** *"In the Polish study, readers and non-readers got the same results."* Say your answer and give a reason from the reading.

11 **Yes, No, or Not Given:** *"The writer thinks the Sorting Hat Quiz is a real personality test."* Say your answer and give a reason from the reading.

12 **Author's purpose:** Why does the writer include Bertram Forer's 1949 experiment?

True or False

Circle T (true) or F (false) according to the reading. Write a correction for each false statement on the dotted line.

1 **T / F** Harry asks the Sorting Hat not to put him in Slytherin.

2 **T / F** The Harry Potter series has sold about 60 million copies.

3 **T / F** The official quiz has questions about imaginary situations.

4 **T / F** Crysel's team asked 236 fans for their quiz results.

5 **T / F** Gryffindors were much more outgoing than everyone else.

6 **T / F** In the Polish study, the quiz worked well for people who had not read the books.

7 **T / F** Forer's students thought the description was quite accurate.

8 **T / F** Each of Forer's students got a different description.

9 **T / F** Tajfel's groups were really based on the paintings the boys liked.

10 **T / F** One school in Australia uses words from the local Darug language for its houses.

Discussion Questions

Talk with a partner or in a small group. The questions move from personal to more abstract.

1 Have you read the Harry Potter books or seen the films? What did you think of them?

2 Which Hogwarts house do you think you belong in? Why?

3 Have you ever taken an online personality quiz? Did the result feel accurate?

4 Which trait do you value most in a friend: bravery, loyalty, curiosity, or ambition?

5 Harry told the hat which house he did not want. Should students choose their own class groups, or should teachers choose?

6 The researchers had no test for bravery. How could you measure whether a person is brave?

7 The Polish study found that the quiz worked mainly for fans. Why might fans answer the questions differently?

8 Forer's students believed a text from a book about star signs. Why do people believe vague descriptions?

9 Can your personality change as you grow older? Is it a good idea to sort children at age 11?

10 Think of a time you were on a team at school or work. How did you feel about the other teams?

11 Tajfel's groups had no real meaning, but the boys still favored their own group. Where do you see this today, for example among sports fans?

12 Do school houses help students make friends, or do they create unfriendly competition?

13 If your school created houses, what would you name them after, and why?

14 Is it fair to judge a person by a group they belong to? Why or why not?

Language Focus: Comparative Adjectives and Adverbs

Use a comparative to compare two people, things, or groups. Short words usually add -er (high, higher; friendly, friendlier). Longer words use more (more helpful, more outgoing). Use than before the second thing you compare. You can make the difference smaller or bigger with slightly, much, or a lot.

In the reading:

- "Hufflepuffs were **friendlier and more helpful than** fans in other houses."
- "Ravenclaws enjoyed hard thinking **more than** the others."
- "Slytherins scored **higher** on traits such as thinking only about themselves…"

Practice: Write two comparative sentences: (a) *a lion / brave / a mouse*; (b) *a real personality test / accurate / a fun quiz*. Add *slightly* or *much* to one of them.

Activities and speed challenge
englishbridges.com/lessons/guide-to-hogwarts-houses

Notes