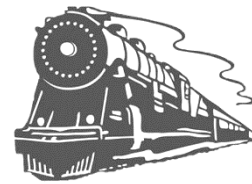


Clouds of steam and smoke billowed into the darkness, lit only by one bright headlight, as the engine slowly pulled into the station. Brakes screeched and complained, bringing the Hogwarts express to a stop.



A large figure in an overcoat approached the first carriage. “Right then, first years! This way please!” he bellowed through an extraordinarily bushy, black beard. “C’mon now, first years,” he continued, swinging a great lantern in front of himself, “don’t be shy.”

All down the line of carriages, doors swung open and passengers spilled out onto the platform, among them Harry and Ron, looking around eagerly. The station soon filled up with schoolchildren of all ages. Smiling to each other, the two boys began to walk towards the towering man in the overcoat.

“Hello Harry,” boomed Hagrid as they approached.

“Hey, Hagrid,” smiled Harry.

“Woah!” gawped Ron in amazement, looking up at the largest man he’d ever seen.

“Right then, this way to the boats. Come on now, follow me,” urged Hagrid, wasting not a second. He turned and strode off towards the awaiting fleet of ferries, followed by a line of cloaked pupils, eager for their first glimpse of the fabled lake that surrounded Hogwarts School.

Within a few minutes, one by one, dozens of small boats began their short journey across the black waters, lit only by moonlight and a swaying lantern. As if by magic, and it *was* magic, the vessels sailed across the lake of their own accord, with only the sound of the water lapping against their sides.

There it was. In all its glory, the mighty Hogwarts School of Wizardry rose up from the misty darkness, hundreds of lights beckoning from its windows. Nobody spoke a word – they just stared as they came closer to their new home.