

PRESS RELEASE

Strictly embargoed until Tuesday 26th May 2020
1500hrs BST 1000hrs EST

J.K. ROWLING

THE ICKABOG

www.theickabog.com

Original children's story by J.K. Rowling serialised free online
for children in lockdown

J.K. Rowling today (Tuesday 26th May) announced on her website (www.jkrowling.com) the free, online serialisation of *The Ickabog*, which she wrote over ten years ago as a bedtime story for her younger children. Rowling decided to share the personal family favourite now to help entertain children, parents and carers confined at home during the Coronavirus lockdown.

The story serialisation launches at 3pm (BST) today, when the first two chapters will be posted on a dedicated website (www.theickabog.com), with 34 daily instalments appearing in total, each weekday, up until Friday 10th July. Written to be read aloud, *The Ickabog* is a fairy tale, set in an imaginary land, and is a complete stand-alone story unrelated to the author's other work. It will appeal to children between the ages of 7 and 9 but can be enjoyed by the whole family. The story will be translated into a number of other languages, and made available on the website shortly after the English language version appears.

Following the free online serialisation, *The Ickabog* will be first published in the English language in print, e-Book and audiobook in November 2020, with publication in other countries following soon after. J.K. Rowling will pledge her royalties from sales of *The Ickabog* to projects assisting groups particularly impacted by the pandemic – further details will be announced at a later date.

Keen for children to be involved as the story unfolds, J.K. Rowling is inviting budding young artists to illustrate her story and be inspired by a host of colourful characters and fast-paced plot as the serialisation appears online.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to enter their children's artwork into an official illustration competition being run by J.K. Rowling's publishers around the world, to win a place in the published book in each territory. The competition is launched today in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India, the USA and Canada and other territories will follow

shortly, making this a truly international collaboration between the writer and young artists around the world. J.K. Rowling will not be part of the judging process but will be suggesting scenes and characters to draw on a daily basis during the online serialisation.

By using the hashtag #TheIckabog, children (or their parents/guardians if they are under 13) are encouraged to post paintings and drawings on social media platforms, with J.K. Rowling dropping in on Twitter occasionally to pick out some of her favourites. A selection of images will also be posted on a gallery on the Ickabog website.

More information about the online serialisation and links to the illustration competitions can be found at www.theickabog.com after 1500hrs BST, today.

J.K. Rowling introduces her story on www.jkrowling.com/j-k-rowling-introduces-the-ickabog/

“The idea for *The Ickabog* came to me while I was still writing Harry Potter. I wrote most of a first draft in fits and starts between Potter books, intending to publish it after *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

However, after the last Potter book I wanted to take a break from publishing, which ended up lasting five years. In that time I wrote *The Casual Vacancy* and Robert Galbraith wrote *The Cuckoo’s Calling*. After some dithering (and also after my long-suffering agent had trademarked The Ickabog – sorry, Neil) I decided I wanted to step away from children’s books for a while. At that point, the first draft of *The Ickabog* went up into the attic, where it’s remained for nearly a decade. Over time I came to think of it as a story that belonged to my two younger children, because I’d read it to them in the evenings when they were little, which has always been a happy family memory.

A few weeks ago at dinner, I tentatively mooted the idea of getting *The Ickabog* down from the attic and publishing it for free, for children in lockdown. My now teenagers were touchingly enthusiastic, so downstairs came the very dusty box, and for the last few weeks I’ve been immersed in a fictional world I thought I’d never enter again. As I worked to finish the book, I started reading chapters nightly to the family again. This was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my writing life, as *The Ickabog’s* first two readers told me what they remember from when they were tiny, and demanded the reinstatement of bits they’d particularly liked (I obeyed).

I think *The Ickabog* lends itself well to serialisation because it was written as a read-aloud book (unconsciously shaped, I think, by the way I read it to my own children), but it’s suitable for 7-9 year olds to read to themselves.

I’ll be posting a chapter (or two, or three) every weekday between **26th May and 10th July** on *The Ickabog* website. We plan to publish some translations soon and will post further details on that website when they’re available.

The Ickabog is a story about truth and the abuse of power. To forestall one obvious question: the idea came to me well over a decade ago, so it isn't intended to be read as a response to anything that's happening in the world right now. The themes are timeless and could apply to any era or any country.

Having decided to publish, I thought how wonderful it would be if children in lockdown, or otherwise needing distraction during the strange and difficult time we're passing through, illustrated the story for me. There will be suggestions about the illustrations we might need for each chapter on *The Ickabog* website, but nobody should feel constrained by these ideas. I want to see imaginations run wild! Creativity, inventiveness and effort are the most important things: we aren't necessarily looking for the most technical skill!

In November 2020, *The Ickabog* will be published in English in print, eBook and audiobook formats, shortly followed by other languages. The best drawings in each territory will be included in the finished books. As publishers in each territory will need to decide which pictures work best for their own editions, I won't be personally judging the entries. However, if parents and guardians post their children's drawing on Twitter using the hashtag #TheIckabog, I'll be able to share and comment! To find out more about the Illustration Competition, go to The Ickabog website when it launches.

I'm pledging all author royalties from *The Ickabog*, when published, to help groups who've been particularly impacted by the pandemic. Further details will be available later in the year."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Ickabog website is at www.theickabog.com

Media Kit available from 1500hrs BST, 26th May at www.theickabog.com/media-kit. Please contact JKRPR for logo and author photograph in the meantime: info@jkrowling.com

J.K. Rowling will not be available for interview.

The story will be serialised in 34 parts on weekdays from 26th May to 10th July 2020 and will be available to read via *The Ickabog* website until 17th July, which is the closing date for the illustration competition too.

The Ickabog is not a Harry Potter story, nor does it live in the Wizarding World. It is a one-off story in the fairy tale tradition, but containing themes often explored in J.K. Rowling's writing.

A book and e-Book will be published in November 2020 in the English language in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and India by Hachette Children's Group's imprint: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, and in the US and Canada by Scholastic. International editions will publish from November onwards: in France by Gallimard Jeunesse; in Italy

by Adriano Salani Editore; in Germany by Carlsen Verlag; in Spain by Ediciones Salamandra; and in Brazil by Editora Rocco.

An audiobook will be published by Audible in November, details will be announced later.

J.K. Rowling has pledged her royalties to projects assisting groups particularly impacted by the pandemic.

The Ickabog illustration Competition is being run by J.K. Rowling's publishers around the world. Further details can be found at at www.theickabog.com/competition

Children (or their parents/guardians if they are under 13) can post illustrations on social media using the hashtag #TheIckabog. There are no prizes for illustrations chosen for display in the Ickabog website gallery or flagged by J.K. Rowling on Twitter.

Media enquiries to: Mark Hutchinson, Nicky Stonehill, Rebecca Salt at info@jkrowling.com

JKRPR
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