

# **EXHIBIT 2**

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**HEADLINE:** Potter's creator is no illusion;  
J.K. Rowling makes a rare U.S. visit to the delight of adoring fans.

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**BODY:**

The Hollywood & Highland mall looked like Platform 9 3/4 at King's Cross Station on Monday morning as 1,600 students, many clutching wands and dressed in witches' hats and robes, descended on the Kodak Theatre for a rare reading by J.K. Rowling, whose Harry Potter novels have sold more than 140 million copies in the United States alone.

Seated on an enormous gold throne with plush red cushions, on a stage featuring large standing replicas of the jackets of her books, she read a passage from the early pages of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," in which Harry says goodbye to his relatives the Dursleys, before taking a dozen pre-selected questions from kids ages 8 to 17.

Rowling, who had not appeared in this country since 2000, is on a weeklong visit to the U.S. -- the so-called Open Book Tour -- with stops Thursday in New Orleans and Friday at New York's Carnegie Hall.

To handle what the author admits has become an "unmanageable" situation, Rowling's American publisher, Scholastic, came up with a novel plan to distribute tickets: 40 schools were chosen randomly by LAUSD and given "Sorting Hats" by which to select 40 students each to attend the event.

Every winner was also given a free copy of the final Potter book, "Deathly Hallows," with the author signing all 1,600 copies after she had read.

For Rowling, herself a former teacher, connecting with schools is significant; as she took the stage to a screaming, shrieking standing ovation, she joked: "It wasn't like this when I was a teacher. If it had been, I might never have left."

It's tempting to be jaded about the Potter phenomenon, which has become such a marketing and cultural juggernaut that we now view it as an inevitable force. On this Open Book Tour, Rowling is giving no interviews; before Monday's reading, she held a 20-minute news conference, the only media she'll do in the U.S.

From a reader's perspective, however, there's something lovely about this, as there is about her insistence to tailor these events for her younger readers, her most devoted fans. The idea is to talk to readers directly -- or as directly as her enormous celebrity will allow. It's an amazing treat, she insists, to have this kind of contact: "Honestly, that's the part I really enjoy."

Indeed, she was relaxed and open at the news conference, talking about the role of religion in her books -- "Like Graham Greene," she said, "my faith is that my faith will return" -- and noting that, although she was "always writing," she felt like she was on vacation because "for the first time in 10 years, I don't have a deadline."

When someone asked how a reported Harry Potter encyclopedia was going, Rowling simply laughed. "It's not coming along," she said, "and I haven't started writing it. I never said it was the next thing I'd do."

That question -- and Rowling's answer -- suggests the challenges she faces, now that the Potter series is done. Asked what genre she might want to work in next, she replied: "I don't really think like that. Really, it'll be a case of what comes to me."

Later, from the stage, she referred to that exchange in answering a question from a student, suggesting that writing doesn't work in such a manner, that it isn't so logical, that we don't choose our stories so much as they choose us. "I want to fall in love with something," she told the assembled students, "in the way I fell in love with the idea of Harry before I write anything else."

What Rowling was getting at is an issue overlooked in most discussions of her writing -- that before Harry Potter became an international trademark, there was a writer at play in her imagination, with a creative vision, a desire to bring a world to life. This is what's attracted all those readers, the way these books reflect their author's heart and soul. It's also why the Potter phenomenon is unlikely to be repeated, even when Rowling finally does produce another book.

And yet, if there's a message here, it is that storytelling matters, that it can connect us, that this is how we communicate important truths about ourselves. If that sounds like mere fancy, just consider those 1,600 students, shrieking as if the author were a rock star, wowed by both her presence and her words.

When a student asked who had inspired her as a girl, Rowling admitted that no one in her family had thought becoming a writer was a sensible thing to do. "Ironic, really," she murmured, to the appreciative laughter of the crowd.

And then, she touched again on the importance of teachers, who encouraged her when no one else had. "Good English teachers," she insisted, "are worth their weight in gold."

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**GRAPHIC:** PHOTO: 1,597 TO GO: Rowling signs "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" copies for some of the 1,600 students at the Kodak Theatre. PHOTOGRAPHER: Anne Cusack Los Angeles Times PHOTO: IN THE SPIRIT: Edison Middle School sixth-graders Samantha Gonzales, left, Maria Zarate and Jasmine Anguiano prepare to enter the Kodak Theatre to hear J.K. Rowling read from her final Harry Potter book. PHOTOGRAPHER: Anne Cusack Los Angeles Times PHOTO: (A1) PHOTOGRAPHER: Anne Cusack Los Angeles Times

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