One for the AGES

You can't outgrow Harry Potter

By CARA NISSMAN

Lounging on a boat off the Virgin Islands, Cristina Castillo couldn't resist the charm of one talented guy while she was soaking in the sun's rays.

"My friend begged me to read one of the Harry Potter books, so I read the first chapter of the first one and was instantly hooked," she said, howling at the memory of reading the first four books in the Harry Potter series in just two days during the spring break of her senior year at Boston University. "I spent all my free time reading."

Castillo expects to fall under Harry's spell again later this week when the fifth in the series, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," is released right after midnight Friday. Despite the exasperating interlude between this installment and the release of the fourth book in summer 2000, Castillo said she's still as eager as ever to delve into the world of Hogwarts, Hagrid and Harry.

"After reading the first four one right after the other, it's annoying to wait so long," said Castillo, 21, of Allston. "But at the same time, I don't care because I know I'm going to love the fifth one."

Castillo isn't alone. Lots of college

STAFF PHOTO BY PATRICK WHITTEMORE

JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY: College student Colleen Barry prepares for the release of 'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,' by rereading the first four books.

'Order' patrol

If you don't mind staying up late, you can buy a copy of "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" just after midnight Friday — and have a little fun as well. Just head over to one of the following bookstores:

- **Children's Book Shop,** 237 Washington St., Brookline Village; 617-734-7323. Store opens at midnight Friday with a costume contest, entertainment and a trivia quiz.
- **Curious George Goes to WordsWorth,** 1 JFK St., Cambridge; 617-498-0062, www.wordsworth.com/harrypotter. Store will be open from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m. Friday and again at midnight. Sidewalk entertainment begins about 10:30 p.m. and includes drawings for free copies of the new book and for Harry Potter baseball hats and buttons.
- **Tatnuck Bookseller,** 335 Chandler St., Worcester; 508-756-7644. Party begins 9 p.m. Friday, featuring live owls from the Massachusetts Audubon Society, a costume contest and a magic workshop.
- **Westwinds Bookshop,** 45 Depot St., Duxbury; 781-934-2128. Store opens Friday at 10:30 p.m. Parking lot will be transformed into Diagon Alley, with the "Harry Potter" movie soundtrack playing. Event features face painting and other activities.
- **Buttonwood Books and Toys,** Shaw's Plaza, Route 3A, Cohasset; 781-383-2665. Party begins at 10 p.m. Friday, with fortunetelling, a video showing, a Harry Potter Legos raffle and a reading of the last chapter of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire."
- **Storybook Cove,** 2053 Washington St., Hanover; 781-871-7801. Store opens at 11 p.m. Friday, offering craft activities (making wizard hats and wands) and storytelling.

— ROSEMARY HERBERT

STAFF PHOTO BY MIKE ADASKAVEG

HOOKED: Anne Fournier, above left, says it would be interesting to see Harry Potter get a girlfriend. Sarah Marith, above right, has been reading the series since she was 14. Both teens are recent Wakefield High graduates.

and high school muggles — many of whom began reading the books in their early teens — can't wait to get their hands on Harry's latest adventure, showing that the wildly popular series by J.K. Rowling isn't just kids' stuff.

"I am obsessed with Harry Potter," said Caitlin Womersley, 20, of Marshfield who recently completed her freshman year at Seton Hall University. "I even reserved the new book — it's 40 percent cheaper if you reserve it now."

Sarah Marith, who started reading the series when she was 14, said she has become increasingly enamored with the Harry Potter books as the plots have grown more complex.

"They're getting gradually longer and more in-depth," said Marith, 18, a recent graduate of Wakefield High School, who has copies of the books in Spanish, French and English. "It's Harry's character that really draws me into it. It's the kind of fantasy that every kid wants to be a part of, having a letter sent to your house saying that you're a wizard."

Yet Harry's humanity also attracts young adults.

"He's really a normal kid who happens to have magical powers," said Colleen Barry, 19, of Plymouth who recently completed her freshman year at UMass-Boston. "He's not this super-cool, on-top-of-it-all type of kid. He's just trying to fit in. He's very easy to relate to."

Others appreciate the author's skill at creating a vivid new world.

"You can learn a lot from J.K. Rowling and the imagination that Harry Potter provokes," said Anne Fournier, 18, a recent graduate of Wakefield High.

As far as the fifth book's plots go, Fournier wouldn't be disappointed if Harry, who will be 15 in "Phoenix," started dating.

"It'd be interesting to see him have a girlfriend," she said. "I just hope he doesn't date Hermione. I don't really like her that much."

Castillo said giving Harry a honey could be risky.

"I hope it won't turn into just another romance novel," she said. "When kids are 14, 15, it's (dating) where they are, but hopefully it won't turn cheesy."

However this tale turns out, the young adults want to be prepared. Most are revisiting the first four tales to get revved up for the new release.

"I like it every time I read it," said Marith. "I've read it several times."

CASTING HIS SPELL: Harry Potter, right, has won the hearts not only of young kids, but also of teens and young adults.