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Finding Magic at the Met

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BASILISKS AND UNICORNS, enchanted mirrors and sorcerers' stones: most of the animals and objects in the Harry Potter books exist only in the imaginations of J. K. Rowling and her legions of young fans. But they do have real counterparts, and not just the ones created by Hollywood. Tomorrow and June 14, aspiring wizards (and even Muggles) can look for treasures symbolizing the Rowling creations in the chambers of secrets on Fifth Avenue: the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

“We wanted to show the mythological and historical base of the wonders and fantasy of the Harry Potter series,” said Judith Shupe [Walsh], founder of Art Smart Adventures, a company offering cultural classes for children. Fluffy, Hogwarts's three-headed guard dog, for instance, is related to Cerberus, the three-headed dog at the gates of Hades in Greek mythology. And while children may not find Fluffy anywhere, they will certainly see Cerberus at the museum.

In Potter/Potters and the Mythology Maze, Art Smart's scavenger hunt celebrating the forthcoming novel “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,” children will search through the Met's Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Medieval collections. Participants, who are encouraged to dress as wizards (prizes will be awarded for the best costumes), will go through a Hogwarts-style ritual to determine their level of Potter knowledge. (The hunt is not recommended for sorcerers under 5.)

Those completing the hunt in less than 90 minutes will receive prizes. And everyone will have thorough lessons in the enchantment of art.