



Imagine...



HARRY AND THE POWER OF THE COLOURED LENSES: FICTION OR NON-FICTION?

THE MAGIC OF FICTION

Author, J.K. Rowling, made some extraordinary and very magical things happen at The Hogwarts School. Words appeared on pages of diaries, books and keys flew around rooms, many objects were not as they seemed and yet readers wanted to believe that this place was real and that these amazing things could occur.

Imagine the famous, fictitious wizard, Harry Potter, sitting with his friends trying to read a spell book. Let's face it, Hermione had probably read most of it before Harry had finished Chapter 1 but nobody thought to ask Harry why he read so slowly. What if reading was a challenge for Harry?

Perhaps in this magical world he witnessed words wriggling like snakes or white space flowing like rivers through the words; whirlpools of words swirling on the page; blurry text that became clear only for an instant or words that melted into other words. Imagine if his friends didn't see these things.

Imagine if Harry had ALWAYS seen this happening and thought that it was NORMAL because he was a wizard and not like most other boys he knew. Does anybody ever ask a person (or wizard) what the text is DOING on the page? And if he did mention that strange things were happening on the page, would people believe him? It is probably quite a normal occurrence at Hogwarts but what if it happened in our world?



REAL NOT IMAGINED

In our world this occurrence is quite REAL and not at all MAGICAL or FUN. This is often the experience of a person who has a perceptual processing disorder such as Irlen Syndrome or perceptual dyslexia. Due to a sensitivity to certain wavelengths of light, the brain doesn't properly process what the eye is seeing on the page or in the surrounding environment.

IN OUR WORLD

In my son's world pictures do move and change but they don't talk like the ones at Hogwarts. Images on digital screens blur and art work adorning our walls becomes distorted. I had no idea this was occurring until my son told me that the faces on the TV had stopped stretching now that he had his Irlen lenses. He has perfect vision but struggled to read music. His pale orange Irlen lenses now prevent the notes from playing games and keep them in their spaces and on their lines.

In my husband's world the appearing and disappearing of words on a page is not something miraculous. It causes slow reading speeds, reduced concentration, poor comprehension and immense frustration. My husband managed to navigate school and university but often felt 'stupid' during written exams because it took him ages to read the information accurately and write the responses. When he was 26 we had him tested for Irlen Syndrome and his whole world changed when he wore lenses with a touch of green ([see Blog: Embracing Irlen Syndrome: one adult's journey Parts 1-4](#)). The white rivers stopped flowing on the page and he could read fluently for the first time in his life.

In my daughter's world the love of books, reading and comprehension was not diminished by what she saw on the page but correct spelling and legible writing were a constant challenge. A simple test for Irlen Syndrome confirmed what we had suspected. When my daughter, who has perfect vision, wore her yellow coloured lenses she finally saw letters and words clearly and the lines on the page didn't wiggle. She could accurately measure with a ruler because the marks became straight. *"Mum did you know that lines on a netball and tennis court are straight?"* We had never thought that Irlen Syndrome would change that too but this condition can distort things in our environment.

In my world these light blue lenses assist me by reducing light sensitivity. Night driving is now not full of glare from oncoming headlights or street light reflection on rain drenched bitumen. Lights in supermarkets and office blocks have become softer and more bearable. I know why I need to wear sunglasses and hats outside. My eyes and my brain are not constantly battling to process things in our ever changing environment.



IN A FICTIONAL WORLD

In Harry's magical world if he had experienced any of symptoms and told Hermione, she would done her research and taken him on an adventure to another realm to discover the ancient mystical power of the coloured lenses. Harry's trademark round glasses would have become bewitched by colour and he would see things the way others did! Readers and movie goers would have embraced the power of the lenses in his FICTIONAL WORLD.

IN THE REAL WORLD

So in the REAL WORLD, please don't tell a person with Irlen Syndrome that the condition does not exist.

It does and it is OUR WORLD.

So unless you have experienced OUR WORLD, please don't tell a person with Irlen Syndrome that the coloured lenses are a PLACEBO and their is no scientific evidence to support coloured lenses.

We know that there is scientific evidence to support these lenses but most importantly those who gain benefit from the lenses are living proof that there is an association between colour and how the brain processes and communicates.

Please **SHARE** our blog to support and empower those with **Irlen Syndrome** and to educate people who do not know that it is **REAL**.



So unless you have experienced OUR WORLD, please don't tell a person with Irlen Syndrome that they are dyslexic and that coloured glasses don't help.

We know that colour doesn't help phonemic dyslexia but many don't understand the difference between perceptual dyslexia and phonemic dyslexia.

FACT NOT FICTION

Please remember that people who wear coloured lenses because they have Irlen Syndrome are actually superheroes with a learning difference who need to keep their glasses on so that they can navigate YOUR WORLD.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SYMPTOMS OR DO A SELF TEST

<https://irlen.com/get-tested/>

Author: Dr Annabel Bowcher (PhD), Science Communicator and co-author with her junior Irlen authors of the children's chapter book adventure series, The Story Weavers of Bacalen. A series with learning difference heroes. bacalenbooks.com.au/blog

FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.bacalenbooks.com.au/irlen-syndrome

www.irlen.com

www.irlensyndrome.org

www.aaic.org.au

30 MARCH 2021