# *Translating the world's best seller*

**1** There are more than 400 million Harry Potter books in the world. But approximately 100 million copies do not contain any lines from the author's original text. That's because they are translations. At the moment, there are versions in over sixty languages, including Welsh, Latin and Ancient Greek.

**2** Jean-François Menard, the French translator of the Harry Potter books, translated the 700-page fourth book in just 63 days. The translators didn't have much time because they could only begin when the English version appeared in the shops. This was because the author wanted the story to be a total secret. In a few countries where the general public's level of English is very high (for example in Scandinavia), it was very important to translate the book quickly. If not, people in those countries could just buy the original English version, not the translation.

a Paragraph ..... why the translators needed to work fast

b Paragraph ..... the number of translated Harry Potter books

c Paragraph ..... some problematic translations

d Paragraph ..... why translating Harry Potter wasn't easy

**3** In other countries such as China, there were unofficial, pirate translations. People sold them on the streets illegally. The author didn't receive any money from these books and often the translations were not very good. A pirate version in Venezuela in 2003 contained many mistakes. The translator occasionally put a few of his own informal messages into the text, for example 'Here comes something I can't translate, sorry', or 'I didn't understand what that meant.'

**4** It's true that the translation of J. K. Rowling's books had some special difficulties. One big problem was with invented words and names. There are a lot of these words in the series – approximately 400! Spanish readers find most of these words exactly the same as in English. So, *quidditch** and *muggles*** are unchanged in the Spanish versions. But in Brazil the translator invented her own Portuguese words to express the ideas and sounds of the original words. So we have *quadribol* to translate *quidditch*, and *trouxas* instead of muggles.

* *Quidditch* is the invented sport that Harry Potter plays.
** *Muggles* are humans who haven't got magical powers.

LIVEWORKSHEETS