



# THE AMBER SPYGLASS

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**The Amber Spyglass** brings the intrigue of **The Golden Compass** and **The Subtle Knife** to a heartstopping close, marking the third and final volume as the most powerful of the trilogy. Along with the return of Lyra, Will, Mrs. Coulter, Lord Asriel, Dr. Mary Malone, and Iorek Byrnison the armored bear, **The Amber Spyglass** introduces a host of new characters: the Mulefa, mysterious wheeled creatures with the power to see Dust; Gallivespian Lord Roke, a hand-high spy-master to Lord Asriel; and Metatron, a fierce and mighty angel. And this final volume brings startling revelations, too: the painful price Lyra must pay to walk through the land of the dead, the haunting power of Dr. Malone's amber spyglass, and the names of who will live - and who will die - for love. And all the while, war rages with the Kingdom of Heaven, a brutal battle that - in its shocking outcome - will reveal the secret of Dust.

## READER'S GUIDE

### QUESTIONS · SUGGESTED READING

#### **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

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Along with the return of Lyra, Will, Mrs. Coulter, Lord Asriel, Dr. Mary Malone, and the armored bear Iorek Byrnison, *The Amber Spyglass* introduces a host of new characters: the Mulefa, mysterious wheeled creatures with the power to see Dust; Gallivespian Lord Roke, a hand-high spymaster to Lord Asriel; and Metatron, a fierce and mighty angel.

And with rich characters and mounting suspense come startling revelations, too: the painful price Lyra must pay to walk through the land of the dead, the haunting power of Dr. Malone's amber spyglass, and the names of who will live - and who will die - for love. And all the while, war rages in the Kingdom of Heaven - the shocking outcome of this brutal battle will uncover the secret of Dust.

In *The Amber Spyglass*, Philip Pullman deftly weaves the cliffhangers and mysteries of *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife* into an earth-shattering conclusion - and confirms his fantasy trilogy as an undoubted and enduring classic. The questions, discussion topics, and author information that follow are intended to enhance your group's reading of each of the books in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Dust, Dark Matter, and Sraf are three different names for the same material. How do these names reflect the different worlds they come from? What attitudes and feelings does each society have about this material?
2. Why do you think the subtle knife breaks when Will thinks of his mother? When the knife breaks, do you think Mrs. Coulter is aware of her influence on Will? Are there any connections between Mrs. Coulter and Will's mother?
3. In each book of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, a special device (such as the alethiometer, the subtle knife, or the amber spyglass) is introduced in connection with the pursuit of Dust. What are the different properties of each instrument? How does each instrument reflect the personality of the person that uses it (i.e., Lyra, Will, and Dr. Malone)?
4. When asked to mend the subtle knife, Iorek is hesitant: "Sometimes a tool may have other uses that you don't know. Sometimes in doing what you intend you also do what the knife intends, without knowing." What do you think the knife's intentions are? Based on these intentions, who do you think created the knife and for what purpose?
5. By the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, what similarities can you see between Lyra and Mrs. Coulter? How is Lyra's storytelling different from Mrs. Coulter's lying?

6. In *The Amber Spyglass*, Mrs. Coulter goes through a dramatic transformation as her maternal feelings for Lyra break through to the surface. What is the catalyst for this change?

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## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

*The Prydain Chronicles* by Lloyd Alexander

*The Sword of Shannara* by Terry Brooks

*The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Earthsea Tetralogy* by Ursula K. Le Guin

*A Swiftly Tilting Planet* and *A Wind in the Door* by Madeleine L'Engle

*The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis

*The Giver* by Lois Lowry

*Paradise Lost* by John Milton

*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

*The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

Teachers can use this guide to discuss the His Dark Materials trilogy with their students. Here are several themes, topics, and other connections appropriate for class work and discussion. For use with grades 7-12.

### About these Books

Philip Pullman's intriguing and haunting trilogy sends fantasy lovers on an incredible journey through other worlds where they meet mysterious creatures and a brave and extraordinary 12-year-old girl, Lyra Belacqua, who has the power to seek truth.



The Golden Compass, young Lyra Belacqua journeys to the far North to save her best friend and other kidnapped children from terrible experiments by evil scientists.



The Subtle Knife takes Lyra to Cittàgazze, where she meets Will Parry, a fugitive boy from our own universe who becomes her ally and friend. On their journey from world to world, Lyra and Will's lives become forever intertwined as they uncover a deadly secret.



And finally, in The Amber Spyglass, Lyra and Will, with the help of two tiny Gallivespian spies and Iorek Byrnison, the armored bear, set out to a world where no other living soul has ever gone, to make their most haunting discovery yet.

### In the Classroom

The Amber Spyglass is the crowning conclusion to the intrigue begun in The Golden Compass and The Subtle Knife. Each of the novels in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy offers an exciting adventure that takes readers, young and old, on a journey through different dimensions to unknown worlds. The electrifying plots and unusual and mysterious characters make these novels excellent choices for reading aloud.

Themes of good vs. evil, betrayal, courage, fear, trust, and love raise important questions, offering students a wonderful opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue. This guide offers questions for discussion and includes activities that connect the language arts, social studies, science, music, and art curriculum.

### Pre-Reading Activity

Religion plays an important part in many works of fantasy, which often include themes of good versus evil and characters searching to understand the basic foundations of their faiths. Ask students to use the Bible, a storybook, or an encyclopedia to read about the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2-3). Have students discuss original sin, why God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and how Adam and Eve's lives changed once they gained knowledge.

## **Thematic Connections**

**Betrayal** - Ask the class to look up the various meanings of the word betrayal. How does Lyra betray Roger in *The Golden Compass*? Discuss whether she was aware that she was betraying him. How does she try to rectify this betrayal? What is Lyra's great betrayal in *The Amber Spyglass*? How do Lyra's mother and father betray her--and then protect her? Discuss how Lyra deals with these betrayals.

In *The Subtle Knife*, Will's mother is in a serious emotional state. He takes her to stay with his piano teacher while he sets out to recover important papers that belong to his father. Discuss whether Will is betraying his mother or helping her in her time of need.

What other characters in His Dark Materials trilogy are guilty of betrayal? Ask the class to draw a parallel between the betrayal in Pullman's novels to that found in the story of Adam and Eve. How is the betrayal in the novels important to the basic conflict in the stories? Ask students to discuss whether reading His Dark Materials has altered their understanding of the act of betrayal.

**Good vs. Evil** - The trilogy challenges our assumptions about good and evil: some witches are good, while some members of the church are evil. What are other examples of unexpected forms of good and evil in the trilogy? At the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, what do Will and Lyra learn about good and evil, about actions versus labels? How will this affect the way they will live the rest of their lives?

What does Lyra mean when she tells Will in *The Subtle Knife* that his *dæmon* is "inside"? Discuss whether people in Will's world--our world--have *dæmons* at all. What animal form do you think Lyra's *dæmon* will take when she becomes an adult? Explain.

In *The Subtle Knife*, the soldiers in the land of Bolvangar are cutting childrens' *dæmons* away. Why does Dr. Lanselius consider this evil work? How does Lord Asriel's mission reflect evil?

**Courage** - Have students trace Lyra's courage as she travels from one dimension to another. At what point does she almost lose her courage? How does Will show courage in *The Subtle Knife*? Discuss how Lyra and Will help one another sustain their courage throughout their quests in *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*.

Engage the class in a discussion about whether having possession of the alethiometer and the subtle knife either gives Lyra and Will courage or threatens it. How does it take courage to leave one another and return to their own worlds at the end of the trilogy?

**Fear** - At the end of *The Golden Compass*, Lyra is afraid of her father, yet admires him. Why does he evoke fear in her? How can she be afraid and admire him at the same time? How is fear the basis of Will's mother's illness? Discuss how fear is related to courage. Engage the class in a discussion about how Lyra and Will's fears contribute to their courage as they face the evil forces.

**Trust**- In *The Subtle Knife*, Will accidentally kills an intruder who wants his father's personal documents and then labels himself a murderer. Why does this enable Lyra to trust him? Which characters do Serafina Pekkala and Lee Scoresby decide to trust? Is their trust warranted? Who are the characters that Lyra once trusted, but in the end finds that she cannot? In what other way does trust play an important role in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy?

**Love** - In *The Amber Spyglass*, Will says to Serafina, "Thank you, Serafina Pekkala, for rescuing us at the belvedere and for everything else. Please be kind to Lyra for as long as she lives. I love her more than anyone has ever been loved." (p. 509) Trace the development of Will and Lyra's love for one another from the time they first meet in *The Subtle Knife* until they part in *The Amber Spyglass*. How does their love affect the fate of the living--and the dead? How does Lyra's adventure help her to discover a new meaning of love?

In *The Subtle Knife*, Will "loved her [his mother] so much he would have died to protect her." (p. 9) How is his search for his father related to his love for his mother? Why can't the subtle knife cut Will's love for his mother?

## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

**Language Arts** - *The Golden Compass* has been described as a heroic novel. Ask students to identify the qualities of a hero. Who are the heroes in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy? Have students select a hero from one of the novels and write a poem about that hero. Encourage students to share their poems in class.

It is quite common for writers of fantasy to create their own vocabularies. Vocabulary, including the names of characters, is often symbolic of the underlying themes and messages of the story. Make a glossary for Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy that represents the unique vocabulary he created.

Philip Pullman is very successful at creating terror in all three novels of his trilogy. Ask students to review the novels and select a scene or episode that is especially terrifying to them. Then ask them to rewrite the passage as a horror story. Their stories should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Some students may wish to illustrate their stories.

**Social Studies** - At the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, Will and Mary return to their world and Will accompanies Mary to her flat. Mary explains to Serafina that she can't just give Will a permanent home because in her world you must follow rules and regulations regarding keeping children. Find out today's rules regarding foster care. What is the purpose of foster care? Discuss whether Will would qualify for foster care. Would Mary qualify as a foster mother?

**Art** - Masks have been used through the ages to represent animals, monsters, supernatural spirits, dream creatures, etc. Ask students to think about which animal would most likely be their dæmon and create a mask to represent that animal. Allow students time to share their masks and to explain why they chose that particular animal as their dæmon.

**Health** - Mary says that Will's mother sounds like a "classic manic-depressive." Ask students to research the symptoms and characteristics of manic-depression or bipolar disorder. How is it different from other types of depression? From anxiety? Research the treatments for various types of depression. What type of treatment is Will's mother likely to need?

**Science** - In Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy, Lyra has the alethiometer, Will has the knife, and Dr. Malone has the spyglass to aid them in their quests. Though these items are fictitious, scientists have always used tools and instruments to conduct investigations. Have students research the type of instruments used through the ages and construct a time line that reveals their development. What instruments do scientists use today?

**Music** - Music plays an important role in modern fantasy and science fiction films. Play music from films such as Star Wars and ask students to analyze the music as it applies to plot development. How is music an important link in communicating story? Divide students into three groups and assign each a novel in the trilogy. Instruct them to locate music that would be appropriate for a film of their assigned novel. Allow time to share the selections.

## **VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE**

There maybe unfamiliar words throughout Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy. Ask students to jot down words that are new to them and try to define the words taking clues from the context of the novels. Such words may include:

In *The Golden Compass*: languid (p. 13), renegade (p.30), malodorous (p. 44), inveigled (p. 46), sanctimonious (p. 60), desultorily (p. 63), soporific (p. 111), and stanchion (p. 274).

In *The Subtle Knife*: despotic (p. 43), malevolent (p. 44), putrefaction (p. 79), parapet (p. 175), and academicians (p. 281).

In *The Amber Spyglass*: lee (p. 8), perpetual (p. 16), vortex (p. 18), decoction (p. 20), propitiate (p. 23), serpentine (p. 29), impregnable (p. 42), hexagram (p. 65), adamant (p. 120), ruthless (p. 128), and fiercest (p. 387).

Teaching ideas prepared by Pat Scales, Director of Library Services, the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Greenville, South Carolina.

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## **Reviews and Awards**

### **Reviews for *The Golden Compass***

\*"This first fantastic installment propels readers along with horror and high adventure...a shattering tale that begins with a promise and delivers an entire universe." --Starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

\*"A totally involving, intricately plotted fantasy that will leave readers clamoring for the sequels." --Starred, *Booklist*

\*"As always, Pullman is a master at combining impeccable characterizations and seamless plotting, maintaining a crackling pace to create scene upon scene of almost unbearable tension." --Starred, *Publishers Weekly*

### **Awards for *The Golden Compass***

[An ALA Notable Book](#)  
[An ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults](#)  
A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year  
[A Booklist Editors' Choice-"Top of the List"](#)

### **Reviews for *The Subtle Knife***

\*"Presented in a rush of sensuous detail that moves and entrances...gorgeous imagery, pulse-pounding action, and the baiting of readers' affections." --Starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

\*"Stunningly ambitious, original, and fascinating...Pullman offered an exceptional romantic fantasy in *The Golden Compass*, but *The Subtle Knife* is adding a mythic dimension that inevitably demands even greater things from the finale." --Starred, *The Horn Book*



\*"The character development as well as the relentless pace...make this a resounding successful sequel." --Starred, *Booklist*

### **Awards for *The Subtle Knife***

[An ALA Best Book for Young Adults](#)

[A Booklist Editors' Choice](#)

A Book Links Best Book

A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

[A Horn Book Fanfare Honor Book](#)

### **Review for *The Amber Spyglass***

\*"The longed-for third volume in this trilogy satisfies deeply: full of grand set pieces, resplendent language, and glorious storytelling...Across this brilliant and vivid canvas, the largest of themes play out: life and death, goodness and evil, self and other, the redemptive power of love. Readers will be chastened -- and warmed -- and sorry to see the last page." - Starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**Ama:** a herdsman's daughter whose curiosity and kindness help save Lyra from the clutches of Mrs. Coulter.

**Balthamos:** one of Will's Angel guides. Like all of his kind he is wise beyond human understanding, though his nature is sarcastic.

**Baruch:** a low-ranking angel and the younger of Will's Angel guides. The love he shares with Balthamos allows them to communicate with each other across great distances.

**Father Gomez:** an agent of the Consistorial Court of Discipline, Father Gomez has been schooled in the highly secret doctrine called Pre-emptive penance, which allows him absolution for the sin of murder. He is sent out by the Court to find - and kill - Lyra.

**Lord Roke:** Gallivespian spy-captain to Lord Asriel. His agents the **Lady Almakia** and **Chevalier Tialys** are sent to protect Lyra and Will and ultimately help to guide them through the world of the Dead.

**Metatron:** a mighty angel appointed by the Authority as regent of the kingdom of heaven.

**No-Name:** a filthy, harpy-like creature that guards the passage between the World of the Dead and the World of the Living. Given power by the Authority to see the worst in everyone, No-name and her compatriots plague the souls in the world of the Dead.

**Sattamax:** Mulefa Elder who describes the inexplicable demise of the Seed Pod trees and enlists Mary to help his people find the cause and the solution to their dire situation.

## GLOSSARY

**The Abyss:** a vast and dark emptiness that lies beyond all worlds. Devoid of all living matter, the Abyss acts as a vacuum for Dust, drawing it in and destroying it. Lyra and her entourage must travel the edge of the abyss between the world of the Dead and the Living.

**Consistorial Court of Discipline:** the disciplinary arm of the Magisterium, it is the Court's duty to investigate acts of heresy and exact punishment against those found guilty. Although both the Society and the Court act in the interest of the Church, they are competitive and attempt to keep their discoveries secret from each other and from the other branches of the Magisterium.

**Gallivespians:** a diminutive people whose short stature - no taller than a human's hand span - belies the deadly poison sting held in the spurs of their ankles. Because of their exceptional smallness, Gallivespians make useful spies, though their haughty behavior would certainly give them away were they larger in size.

**Gyropter:** small military air vessel, similar in form to a helicopter.

**Intention Craft:** created by Lord Asriel's iron-works, the intention craft is a flying machine that is operated by both an individual and his/her daemon. Once both person and daemon are strapped in, the craft is able to read their intentions and fly where they wish.

**Kingdom of Heaven:** The world where the Authority and Metatron reign. It is Lord Asriel and his allies' hopes to establish a **Republic of Heaven**.

**Mulefa:** cattle-like creatures dependant on large round seedpods they use as wheel attachments at the bottoms of their legs. The Mulefa live in communal societies that are very much in touch with the natural world that surrounds them. It is through her contact with the Mulefa that Dr. Mary Malone discovers the Amber Spyglass and uncovers the mystery of the disappearing scraf. The word Mulefa simply means people.

**The Society of the Work of the Holy Spirit:** the research arm of the Magisterium that tests and classifies heretical speculation. Members of the Society are sworn to poverty and chastity, but not to obedience, as it is necessary to their work that speculation should be allowed.

**Sraf:** the Mulefa word for Dust. Mulefa have the ability to see Scraf with their naked eyes. Large quantities of Scraf accumulates around conscious things that allow the Mulefa to determine that Mary Malone is a thinking being like them.

**Tualapi:** gigantic, white malevolent birds that periodically attack Mulefa settlements destroying buildings and raiding food stores.

**Zalif:** the Mulefa word for individual.

**Zeppelin:** large military air vessel constructed of heavy oiled fabric filled with gas.