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His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass / The Subtle Knife / The Amber Spyglass



Synopsis

The only hardcover omnibus of the best-selling and award-winning fantasy trilogy, in a Contemporary Classics edition. Philip Pullman's trilogy is a masterpiece that transcends genre and appeals to readers of all ages. His heroine, Lyra, is an orphan living in a parallel universe in which science, theology, and magic are entwined. The epic story that takes us through the three novels is not only a spellbinding adventure featuring armored polar bears, magical devices, witches, and daemons, it is also an audacious and profound reimagining of Milton's Paradise Lost that has already inspired a number of serious books of literary criticism. Like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis before him, Pullman has invented a richly detailed and marvelously imagined world, complex and thought-provoking enough to enthrall adults as well as younger readers. An utterly entrancing blend of metaphysical speculation and bravura storytelling, His Dark Materials is a monumental and enduring achievement.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Philip Pullman's dark fantasy trilogy, His Dark Materials, ostensibly written for children, is actually literature of a much higher order. The title of the trilogy comes from a particularly powerful passage of Milton's Paradise Lost, the great religious epic poem whose central story is the thematic basis for this trilogy. Another important influence on these three novels is the Christian Parsifal or Sir Percival

story, which dates back to the early middle-ages as part of both the King Arthur and the Holy Grail cycle of tales. From its very first page, Pullman's crisp, evocative writing creates a world not quite like ours but just similar enough to be uncomfortable and strangely familiar. As readers of the trilogy know, most of the events in these books do not occur on our world or even in our universe. Of course, because this is post Tolkien fantasy, Mr. Pullman has absorbed all of the usual fantasy tropes and has no desire to repeat them. So what he writes is new, deeper, with fully rounded characters that come alive on the page. His courageous young heroine, Lyra Belacqua with her daemon familiar, Pantalaimon, always by her side, is one of the great creations in "children's literature". Lyra and Pan make an especially entertaining, often very amusing, pair. Her fearsome Uncle, Lord Asriel, is one of those rich, ambiguous creations that keep you guessing as to their motives, reminiscent of Professor Snape in J. K. Rowling's Potter novels. Pullman's writing is lean and well crafted and exciting to read. Once started, it is very difficult to set aside. This three volume boxed set contains the books in hardcover with their original dustcovers. Their artwork is lovely. It also contains a map: a necessity in today's complex world of fantasy.

This is by far the most engaging, intelligently-written works of children's literature I have ever read. (And for anyone getting hyped up about the religious factor, please read this before you judge!) The prose is sophisticated (I would say this is for kids with a very good vocabulary, maybe a 9+), and the characters are engaging. And talk about action packed! Pullman always keeps the reader guessing, and the action always is intriguing. The books do have violence in them (nothing too gory, but there are some battle scenes with blood, and some characters die), so keep that in mind if you want to read it to kids younger than 9. A lot of people say this book is anti-religious, anti-God, atheistic, etc. Most of these reviews have obviously not read the series. I actually found *The Golden Compass* in the book closet of the Catholic school where I taught English Lit! This book for certain is NOT anti-Christian. It does not preach evil values, & it does not encourage children to kill God. The book has a lot of religious aspects: souls, angels, and spirits. This book IS anti-religious corruption, and it IS against using religion to justify evil. One review mentioned the book encourages female circumcision: so wrong!...what the book said was that religions have used faith in God to cause harm to many, including the cutting of genitalia! And if Pullman is an atheist, so what? C.S. Lewis was a Christian. Does that mean Jews, Muslims and Buddhists can't enjoy the Narnia series, even though its messages aren't parallel to their own religious values? One thing that I do like is that Pullman creates very strong-minded children for his main characters, especially Lyra.

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