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Northern Lights



Synopsis

Published in 40 countries, Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy--The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, and The Amber Spyglass--has graced the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, Book Sense, and Publishers Weekly bestseller lists. In 1996, The Golden Compass changed the face of fantasy publishing, and 2006 marks its 10 Year Anniversary--and an opportunity to celebrate with a deluxe hardcover. Pullman created new material just for this edition (archival documents, scientific notes and "found" letters of Lord Asriel) which has been illustrated and handlettered by renowned British artist Ian Beck and will be included in the back matter. The deluxe edition also features Pullman's own chapter opening spot art. A quality collectible--with the enticement of never-before-seen new material--for Pullman fans. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (1,830 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

First of all this is really a review of the trilogy and not The Golden Compass on its own - (I prefer the British title Northern Lights and I wonder why it has a different title in North America?). Its been a long time since I read a book ostensibly for children, possibly the last time was when I was an actual child unless you count a couple of adult re-readings of Tolkien - but I felt I had to read it to know what the fuss was about - both from the ample praise given to these books by critics and also some of the controversy they seem to have provoked - some of which is touched on in these reviews. And yeah I was impressed - I felt genuinely gripped by the plot and went out and bought both sequels right after reading Northern Lights and read them all in a day and its not everyday I do that.

Incidentally I don't want to sound like I'm boasting but the last few books I read included Jorge Luis Borges, Albert Camus and Umberto Eco - all fairly grown up, intellectual authors so the previous reviewer's comment that the only people who'd enjoy this are either children or just stupid is just blatantly untrue. There is so much to admire in these works - the creation of Lyra's world with its alternative version of history, the interesting touch of the daemons and the way they represent the characters' natures, the depiction of the frozen north with its Panserborne and witches etc was just fascinating, along with the other parallel worlds visited over the trilogy (though Lyra's is the most fully realised I think) as was the whole underlying framework of Pullman's universe with its blend of theoretical physics, William Blake, Paradise lost, theology etc - you have to salute Pullman's creativity and imagination here.

Whew! I just finished reading all three of Phillip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" books in a little over a week (I couldn't put them down!), and I'm still trying to absorb all of this. My initial reaction: this is going to be an all-time classic, and certainly not just of "young adult" or "fantasy" books (Phillip Pullman himself has stated many times that he can't read "fantasy," because it "doesn't tell [him] anything interesting about being a human being." While it is certainly different than the "Lord of the Rings," it is NOT AT ALL ridiculous to place Pullman's creation in the same pantheon as Tolkien's, which is something I swear I never thought that I would say. Anyway, the bottom line is that this trilogy is an amazing, mind-blowing, fascinating, exciting, heartbreaking, work of transcendent brilliance, and it starts with the story of Lyra, somewhat inaccurately titled, "The Golden Compass" (I guess that sounds better than "The Alethiometer" or "Lyra vs. the Gobblers" or something, but I strongly prefer the British title, "Northern Lights"). Also, the marketing of this book is very strange - if you look at the cover you might think this was some warm, fuzzy children's adventure story about a girl and her pet bear. Not!!! Instead, how about Phillip Pullman's dark take on creation and extended riff on multiple themes raised in John Milton's "Paradise Lost" and the Book of Genesis. The bottom line: if Phillip Pullman is mainly for children, than so are John Milton and the Bible! I don't think so....

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