

Philip Pullman, Master Storyteller



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Philip Pullman is one of the most commercially and critically successful British authors of the past decade. With a writing career extending back to the early 1970s, Pullman's great achievement has been in the publication of the "His Dark Materials" trilogy: "Northern Lights" (1995; US title "The Golden Compass"), "The Subtle Knife" (1997) and "The Amber Spyglass" (2000). With these novels, which have appealed equally to children and to adults, Pullman has carved a space for himself as a writer of moral seriousness, imaginative depth and storytelling virtuosity. Claire Squires' book is the first comprehensive and authoritative study of this great writer. The focus is on Pullman's central achievement with "His Dark Materials", but it also considers his entire oeuvre. Importantly, the book informs readers about the contexts, sources and influences behind the trilogy, and examines the controversies and debates that have surrounded the trilogy and its creator, since its publication. 'Claire Squires investigates and clarifies many perplexing ambiguities in Pullman's trilogies. The wealth of information makes this an important source book for Pullman's readers. Especially valuable is her incisive selection of comments from Pullman himself, drawn from interviews and other informal writings, which open exciting dimensions for interpretation of the trilogy. Encyclopedic in its range, the book stretches from factual detail to an overview of theoretical analysis, includes significant biographical and bibliographical materials, and even explores adaptations of the trilogy into other media. Highly readable, and impressive in its extensive scope and detail, this book is a "must have" for all Pullman enthusiasts.' - Dr. Carole Scott, editor of "His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy". 'It has been 10 years since "The Golden Compass" (Knopf, 1996) first appeared in the United States. Embraced by critics and readers alike, the book grew into a trilogy known as "His Dark Materials," which placed Pullman in the forefront of a rising tide of hefty fantasy cycles, just ahead of the "Harry Potter" series. Squires covers every aspect of the Pullman phenomenon, examining the success of the series from many angles - characterization, theme, setting, and storytelling skill - as well as adaptations to stage and screen. Of particular interest is her chapter on "Intertextuality," which discusses literary influences on Pullman's writing, both his acknowledged references to Milton and Blake and the connections critics have noted to writers of folktale, fantasy, and science fiction. Squires does not shy away from the controversy that Pullman's themes have stirred up - his apparent diatribe against religion in the form of "the Authority" and the Magisterium, and the ending of the trilogy in which Lyra and Will must part ways forever - and she refers to many direct quotes from Pullman himself as well as commentators on the series. A chapter on the author's other writing (which includes historical fiction, fantasy, adventure, and contemporary fiction as well as adult novels) and an extensive bibliography of books and articles about his work round out this accessible study.' - "School Library Journal" Connie C. Rockman, Stratford Library Association, CT Copyright [copyright] Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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