



## ***The Golden Compass***

by Philip Pullman

### **Recommended Ages:**

12 and up



[helenplum.org](http://helenplum.org)

**Summary:** It was no ordinary life for a young girl: living among scholars in the hallowed halls of Jordan College and tearing through motley streets on mad quests for adventure. Lyra's greatest adventure began the day she heard hushed talk of an extraordinary magical dust—found only in the vast Arctic expanse of the North—rumored to possess profound properties that could unite whole universes. But there were those who feared the particle and would stop at nothing to destroy it. Catapulted into a terrible struggle, Lyra is forced to seek aid from witches and armored bears. As she journeys into unbelievable danger, she does not have the faintest clue that she alone was destined to win, or to lose, this more-than-mortal battle.

**Discussion Questions: Spoiler alert!** Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. The author tells us that *The Golden Compass* takes place “in a universe like ours, but different in many ways.” How do you think Lyra's universe relates to ours?
2. What is a daemon? What function do they serve? Would you like one? What form do you think it would most often take?
3. Lyra's friend the sea captain says “when your daemon settles, you'll know what sort of person you are.” What do you think the daemon settling represents?
4. Some readers say that this book is hard to get into. What was your experience? Do you like reading about alternative worlds in which you need to learn the “rules” before you understand the action of the story?
5. Describe Lyra. What kind of person is she? Do you think you would like her? What are her faults?
6. Name the ways Lyra's world is different from ours.
7. What do you think Dust is? What purpose does it serve?
8. How would you describe the process of “cutting”? What do they hope it will achieve?
9. Think about the following characters and plot items. What role do they play in Lyra's journey?
  - Lord Asriel, a relative of Lyra's
  - the Master, head of Jordan College
  - Roger Parslow, Lyra's friend, the kitchen boy
  - the alethiometer, the “golden compass” item that tells the truth
  - Mrs. Coulter, an elegant lady
  - Ma Costa, a gyptian matron

- John Faa, lord of the western gyptians
  - Farder Coram, a wise old gyptian man
  - lorek Byrnison, an armored polar bear, Lyra's friend
  - Serafina Pekkala, a Lapland witch
  - Lee Scoresby, a Texan aeronaut or balloonist
10. How are lorek and Lord Asriel alike?
11. Did the ending surprise you? Did it leave you satisfied?  
Are you going to read *The Subtle Knife*, the second book in the series?

**Activities:** Design your own daemon using collage, computer illustrating programs, or other materials.

*Adapted from Multnomah County Library.*