His Dark Materials Workpack

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His Dark Materials
based on the novels
by Philip Pullman
adapted by Nicholas Wright

Further production details:
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Philip Pullman's
His Dark Materials

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The play

Please note: complementary material, including images, audio diaries, interviews, and recordings from rehearsals and performances can be found at the companion website, www.stagework.org.uk. The site will grow over the weeks of performance so it is worth visiting it more than once.

Philip Pullman’s novels, *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) make up the hugely popular *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Appealing to both adults and children, the books have sold in their millions, been translated into more than thirty languages, and from December 2003, are being performed at the National Theatre as two three-hour plays, adapted by Nicholas Wright and directed by Nicholas Hytner. The success of the trilogy lies not only in its ability to engage readers in an extraordinary and powerful imaginary journey, but also in its acknowledgement of deeply-felt cultural needs: the need to interrogate ethical issues, encompassing scientific research and the place of religion in contemporary society; the need to rethink adult-child relationships when childhood itself seems to be under threat: some adults are reluctant to leave childhood behind – creating the new phenomenon of the ‘kiddult’ – and paedophiles are feared to be lurking in the largely un-patrolled dimension of cyberspace; the need to question traditional institutions and crucially, the possibility for effective action by individuals.

In many ways, the belief these texts register in the possibility of taking action and the necessity to assume responsibility for creating the self are the most original, most encouraging and most Pullmanesque themes developed in the course of *His Dark Materials*. Where many of the most famous children’s books, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (all, incidentally, regularly performed to Christmas audiences) depict growing up as the loss of innocence and the end of the golden age of childhood and so trap their protagonists in a perpetual state of childhood, *His Dark Materials* has quite a different attitude to growing up. To survive and become a moral, responsible adult, capable of functioning in the world is the goal it sets Lyra and Will, who are role models for its readers. Growing up is the ultimate adventure in Pullman’s books. It isn’t easy; indeed, in their case it will include loss, separation and betrayal as well as love and friendship and the many pleasures that come with experience. Like William Blake before him, Pullman shows readers that life can’t tolerate perpetual innocence; experience isn’t diminution, though it is change. These books encourage readers to embrace the challenges that lie ahead and to be excited by the opportunities they have to make an impact on the world around them, while in the process constructing identities of which they can be proud. In what are uncertain times, this is surely a valuable lesson for the young, and one that promotes the skills being fostered through the new Citizenship curriculum. It is not accidental that this message is conveyed through the medium of fantasy.

Rosemary Jackson has described fantasy as ‘the literature of subversion’ for the way it gives expression to ‘the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over, and made “absent”.’ It might be more accurate to term it a literature of substitution, since fantasy works by substituting something acceptable to an individual or her/his society for something that is forbidden, transgressive, feared, or otherwise problematic. It is important to keep both the subversive and the substitutive dimensions of
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fantasy in mind when thinking about it as a genre and when reading or watching *His Dark Materials*. What is being articulated in these texts that cannot be expressed so effectively elsewhere in culture, and what forms of substitution take place in the narrative? Should we be surprised that a work of fantasy is given such stature and discussed across the age range?

**Fantasy's appeal to all age groups**

One of the strengths of fantasy is its strong appeal to all age groups. It is surely significant that among the twenty-one most popular books selected by the public during 2003 in the BBC's 'The Big Read', the six which can most accurately be described as being written for a young audience include five fantasy novels. Among these is Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Also in this list, and still very near the margins of 'children's literature' in their appeal to 'young adults,' are other fantasies, by J.R.R. Tolkien, Terry Pratchett and Douglas Adams. From parents reading *Winnie-the-Pooh* to pre-school children and enjoying the similarities between the book's characters and their own grown-up friends, to the teenage 'disc world' fanatic sharing his/her enthusiasm with parents or older siblings, the audience for any fantasy story has the potential to be broader than that for realism.

Why does fantasy seem to appeal to a wider range of readers than realism? One reason is surely the fact that most fantasy books allow readers to make their own interpretations of plot, events and characters. Readers may simply enjoy an exciting story and getting to know interesting characters from the inside, but they can also read the books as metaphors for other aspects of life. Most of Pullman's younger readers are likely to be attracted by the personalities of Lyra and Will, recognising, in the development of their characters and relationship, issues which are relevant to adolescents. They will relish the travel to different worlds, Lyra's search for Roger, her conversations with Pantalaimon, and the details of Will's use of the subtle knife. Adult readers, especially those with a literary background, while not rejecting these elements, may be fascinated by the differences between Lyra's Oxford and the one we know, enjoy recognising Pullman's echoes of Milton and Blake, and be interested by his views about religion, whether they share his unbelief or not. The fantasy genre allows these and other readings to coexist, where a realistic novel might be over-stretched if it attempted to offer the same range of possibilities.

Departure from everyday reality has always proved an effective background for the exploration of religious and philosophical ideas; Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* explore theological ideas in a cosmic setting, while the largely down-to-earth *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer are primarily concerned with abuses in the medieval church and sexual relationships between the characters in the stories. This period of 'time out' from everyday reality, and especially the element of disguise in fantasy makes it a particularly effective vehicle for commenting on contemporary issues without being overly didactic; it also makes it possible to explore what, if dealt with realistically, could be too painful. Like dreams, fantasy distances difficult material, but this does not mean that it is escapist. As the National Theatre's rehearsal processes make clear, *His Dark Materials*, like nearly all fantasy, doesn't escape but is closely linked to reality. For example, the audio diary²

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² The play

Niamh Cusack (as Serafina Pekkala) with her daemon Kaisa
photo Ivan Kyncl
kept by the actor Russell Tovey, who plays the character Roger, explains how research into topical issues and real-life stories was used to help the actors understand the emotions of the children who were kidnapped by the Gobblers: ‘We sat and talked about comparing how the children feel, with the film The Magdalene Sisters where the girls get picked up and put into a convent for the rest of their lives… [and] how kids during the war (cockney kids) were sent to Australia to live and how they were sending letters to their parents and their parents were sending letters to them, but neither ever received any of the letters.’ They also read police reports on Iraqi children who had been taken, beaten and mentally tortured. Preparatory work of this kind reveals much about the impact of His Dark Materials, and shows Nicholas Hytner’s decision to adapt the work for the National Theatre, made well before Pullman was awarded the Whitbread Prize for Literature and before the current war in Iraq, to have been prophetic.

It is not necessary to rehearse the frequent attempts to categorise different varieties of fantasy (a list of further reading about fantasy is provided in the bibliography if you wish to see how others have done this), but it is worth noting some of the types of fantasy that His Dark Materials is not. Unlike some of Pullman’s other work, such as Count Karlstein and Clockwork, and also unlike J.K. Rowling’s ‘Harry Potter’ books, His Dark Materials has little place for magic, at least in the sense of its being in the hands of powerful magicians. Despite the importance of daemons, it can’t really be called animal fantasy, like Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows and A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh. Though there is much travel between universes, it is not time-travel, unlike Philippa Pearce’s Tom’s Midnight Garden. Instead, His Dark Materials involves alternative universes, a sub-genre which in the hands of writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin, may exclude ‘our’ world, while others, such as C.S. Lewis, include a version of this earth among the possible locations for action. The idea of having a nearly infinite number of possible worlds is particularly characteristic of the novels of Diana Wynne Jones, a highly regarded fantasy writer whose work, like Pullman’s, is often considered very challenging for young readers. Although none of the His Dark Materials books includes maps, there is no doubt that the excitement of experiencing worlds that differ from ours in original ways features high among the elements attracting readers – an aspect implicitly recognised in the recent publication of Lyra’s Oxford. The street plan provided in this book (probably particularly for the amusement of an adult reader familiar with the location) reveals how similar the shape of Lyra’s Oxford is to the university city that readers can visit, though places such as Jordan College will not be found there.

Philip Pullman’s life and work

Like many writers, Philip Pullman has made considerable use in his writing of his own experience. His time as a teacher of pupils aged between 9 and 13 seems to have been particularly significant for him, not so much in providing themes for his novels, as in fostering his enthusiasm for drama – he wrote several plays for his pupils – and giving him a lively awareness of the reading interests of his potential audience. His continuing interest in education is displayed in the contribution he made recently to a small collection of reflections on the National Literacy Strategy (Meetings with the Minister, 2003) in which he deplores the
pressures imposed on teachers by the prevalence of testing, which makes it difficult for them to allow their pupils to develop their abilities freely, or to enjoy reading for its own sake.

When he was a child, Philip Pullman’s imagination was nurtured by the stories (Biblical and otherwise) told to him and his brother by his Anglican clergyman grandfather, as well as by an eclectic range of tales from other sources. His university career, at Exeter College, Oxford, was undistinguished, but it had the merit of acquainting him with the roofs of the colleges (very important to Lyra’s childhood) and cultivating his interest in drama and music. Although his first book was for adult readers, Pullman’s writing career was given a considerable boost by his experience in the classroom, as his first children’s novel, Count Karlstein, or The Ride of the Demon Huntsman, developed from a play he wrote for the children he taught. While not all his novels could categorically be classed as fantasies, few involve what might be termed everyday reality. The Sally Lockhart quartet, his best-known work before he embarked on the His Dark Materials saga, is set in late-Victorian London, and is notably influenced by the style and the plots of Arthur Conan Doyle’s ‘Sherlock Holmes’ stories, as well as the Dickensian world of coincidence and villainy. Like his later and better-known trilogy, this quartet involves a strong heroine, whose parents have been absent from her childhood (in this case through death), and who ventures into hazardous situations in the pursuit of truth.

His Dark Materials: The plot in brief
The three volumes of his trilogy – which, Pullman claims with some justice, form a single (rather lengthy!) novel – follow the adventures and the growing love between Lyra, a girl from a world which, as Pullman says in Northern Lights, is ‘like ours but different in many ways,’ and, from volume II, Will, who is a fugitive from justice in ‘our’ world, since he has accidentally killed a man. The Church, depicted here as a corrupt institution, is seeking to prevent Lyra from becoming ‘the new Eve’, because her ‘Fall’, unlike that in Genesis, will be a means of freeing the world from the arbitrary and life-denying strictures of ‘The Authority’ (a term used to correspond to God, arrogated to himself by an elderly angel) and the Church itself. Lyra succeeds in fulfilling her prophesied role, but at the end of the saga, learns that for the enduring happiness of the living and the preservation of the dead from a prolonged empty existence, she and Will must forever be apart.

The two National Theatre plays, while in many ways faithful to the original text, inevitably omit some incidents and characters, and make a division in the middle of the second volume. Even after such omissions and necessary condensing of the plot, as Dominic Leclerc (Assistant Director) explains in his audio diary,”

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I have stolen ideas from every book I have ever read’, says Philip Pullman in the Acknowledgements pages for The Amber Spyglass. His use of existing literary sources

The Golden Monkey (Mrs Coulter’s daemon), Patricia Hodge (as Mrs Coulter), Timothy Dalton (as Lord Asriel), Stelamaris (Lord Asriel’s daemon)

photo Ivan Kyncl
The play

means that it is helpful to think of Pullman’s writing as intertextual. Intertextuality refers to the whole network of ways in which one text is read in relation to all the others that both reader and writer have and will read. All texts depend on other texts for their meanings; this dynamic is particularly relevant to the use and function of intertextuality in children’s literature since young readers are necessarily at the start of their literary/reading histories and so have a smaller reservoir of literary texts available to them in comparison to adults – though they are likely to have a larger body of non-literary texts such as television programmes, commercials, popular music, illustrations, films and cartoons on which to draw. Moreover, with the increasing numbers of books in circulation, including those which are deliberately intertextual, the order in which texts are encountered by the reader may not be as intended by the writer. For instance, many children today encounter Jon Scieszka’s The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs (1989) before they know the original tale, just as Pullman acquaints them (whether or not they are aware of this fact) with the work of Blake, Milton and other significant writers from the past.

Pullman’s intertextuality is characteristically optimistic; his writing uses earlier works as building blocks for making something entirely fresh and new. At the same time, he happily acknowledges that each generation owes a debt to the thinkers and writers who have gone before and who have prepared the way for new ideas, ideas suited to current needs and circumstances. In the case of His Dark Materials, Pullman points to ‘three debts that need acknowledgement above all the rest’. These are to an eighteenth-century German writer, unlikely to be familiar to most readers, and to two great English poets, Milton and Blake.

Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1812), On the Marionette Theatre4

This short piece, written in 1810 and first read by Pullman in 1978, tells of an encounter between the narrator and an old friend who is an expert dancer and also possesses a good deal of knowledge about puppets. The discussion begins by considering the potential for dancing by figures whose centres of gravity are placed in such a way that their movements, unlike those of human dancers, are controlled solely by the law of gravity. Thus puppets can move with a fluidity of which human beings are incapable once their natural childish grace is lost, as they develop consciousness of themselves. The dancer also recounts a story about a bear which can defeat any human fencer because it is able to detect the falsity of any thrusts which are intended to deceive. His conclusion is that ‘Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness.’ The narrator enquires whether this implies that ‘we must eat again of the tree of knowledge in order to return to the state of innocence,’ and is given an affirmative answer.

It is easy to see the connections between this story and the controlling theme of His Dark Materials. In the spirit of von Kleist’s dancer, Pullman does not deplore the inevitable loss of ‘grace’ which is associated with maturity, but rather advocates what might be described as a ‘second Fall’ as a step on the way to ‘becoming gods,’ by linking experience to self-knowledge.

An interesting sideline to this is the obvious influence of von Kleist’s essay on Pullman’s invention of the armoured bears; it is even possible that it may have sparked off one of his most original imaginative creations, the daemons. It is therefore particularly apt that the
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performance of non-human roles in the National Theatre production is allocated to puppets; however, this also highlights a major difference between reading His Dark Materials and performing it. On the page it is possible for the narrator simply to announce that a daemon has changed shape; on stage it must be shown. Some of the daemon puppets, created by the Curry brothers who also made the puppets for the staged version of The Lion King, are worked by the actors; in some cases puppeteers are involved. Puppets are tucked into sleeves and hidden in special compartments in costumes, and present a constant challenge to the actors, as Russell Tovey explains: ‘you’re not just thinking about the acting… you’ve got this animal with you all the time that… you’ve got to make come alive effortlessly’. Puppet workshops, choreography, visits to the zoo and constant rehearsals were used to help actors turn puppets into daemons, so that it doesn’t seem as if they ‘are just holding a stuffed parrot at the end of an arm, but that they are holding a real life force with a real feeling of energy between the performer and the daemon.’ (Tovey)

John Milton (1608–1674), Paradise Lost (published in 1667 but written over a long period)

Pullman’s debt to Milton is not only signalled in his acknowledgements at the end of the trilogy, but also in the quotation from Paradise Lost (Book II, lines 910–919) from which he has drawn the title His Dark Materials and which is used as the epigraph to Northern Lights. Milton’s context is the point at which Satan, on his way to the newly created Earth in the later fulfilled hope of tempting the first humans from their obedience to their creator, meets Sin, the daughter who sprang from his head when he led the revolt in heaven, and their mutual offspring, Death. The ‘dark materials’ are the four elements out of which God had created the universe, while Pullman’s title presumably alludes to the rich potential not only of these materials but also of the ‘Dust’ which is so significant to his theme. Milton’s works, again mostly Paradise Lost, also provide the epigraphs to six of the 38 chapters of The Amber Spyglass, a number equalled by those which are quoted from the Bible and only exceeded by the ten from the works of Blake. Milton’s sympathies during the English Civil War were strongly Republican, and he published pamphlets attacking monarchy and justifying the execution of King Charles I. Paradise Lost claims to ‘justify the ways of God to man’ (line 26) but (presumably despite himself) Milton is usually judged to have conveyed to the reader a good deal of kinship with the figure of Satan in his revolt against God. This was to such an extent that, famously, Blake claimed that Milton ‘was of the Devil’s party without knowing it.’ Satan’s heroic first speech when he and the other rebel angels have been consigned to hell displays Milton’s appreciation of the feelings of those who have risen against a repressive force; the speaker wins our sympathy even though we know we should be on the side of God:

All is not lost – the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
… We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war,
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven. (Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 106–124)

The figure in His Dark Materials who corresponds most closely to Satan is Lord Asriel, in his quest to defeat ‘The Authority.’ Although he is not an angel, his name echoes
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those of several archangels (Gabriel, Uriel, Uzziel, Ithuriel) who figure in Milton’s epic, and his pride and fortitude certainly have parallels with Satan’s qualities. The epic scale of *Paradise Lost* and Satan’s travel to find the earth also seem to be echoed in *His Dark Materials*, though obviously Biblical and agnostic influences also proliferate.  

In his depiction of a second ‘Fall’, Pullman seems to owe more to Milton’s description of Paradise and of Adam and Eve’s sojourn in it than to the brief description in *Genesis*. The sensuous quality of the relationship of the first humans and their delight in the taste of the forbidden fruit is evident in Milton’s poem:

So saying, she embraced him, and for joy
Tenderly wept, much won that he his love
Had so ennobled…
She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
With liberal hand. He scrupled not to eat…
(*Paradise Lost*, Book IX, lines 990–999)

These sentiments are echoed when Lyra and Will eat the sweet red fruit that Mary Malone has given them and become aware of the depth and mutuality of their love (*The Amber Spyglass*, pp. 491–2). In effect, it is impossible to imagine *His Dark Materials* existing without Milton’s prior example, though whether or not Milton, as a devout if somewhat heterodox Christian, would have relished his enlistment to the ranks of ‘the Republic of Heaven’ remains debatable.

The works of William Blake (1757–1827)

William Blake is an artist whose radical sympathies lead Pullman to claim him as ‘one of the founding fathers of the republic of Heaven’. The first, and perhaps most striking, of these allusions to Blake occurs at the beginning of the final volume of the trilogy, when Lyra is in a drugged sleep under the power of Mrs Coulter, since her mother wishes to preserve her from meeting the prophesied temptation, thus precipitating the second Fall. Pullman’s epigraph to the chapter signposts the similarity between Lyra’s situation and that of Lyca, ‘The Little Girl Lost’ in Blake’s poem of that name in the ‘Songs of Experience’; it consists of the last three lines from stanza 7 of Blake’s poem:

Sleeping Lyca lay;
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
View’d the maid asleep.

The similarity of name is surely more than coincidental. The whole spirit of Pullman’s trilogy, reinforced near the end in the separation of Lyra and Will, emphasizes the need to live in an informed and ultimately an ‘experienced’ manner, a message akin to that of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (combined volume 1794). There are inevitably many differences, both those resulting from the different cultural contexts of Blake and Pullman, their choice of different literary forms, and the writers’ different philosophical standpoints. Nevertheless, it is clear that Pullman values much in Blake’s writing and thinking.

Other literary influences

It is impossible to do justice to the many other literary sources that Pullman appears to have drawn on in *His Dark Materials*, though it is worth noting that, like much of Pullman’s longer work and especially the Sally Lockhart novels, *His Dark Materials* can be regarded as a descendant of – and perhaps a tribute to – the Victorian triple-decker novel, which affects his work in some interesting ways. As well as being serialised, many Victorian novels were initially published in book form in three companion volumes, published before the complete text was finished. This had marketing advantages in that it created an appetite and excitement about
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the work, with readers waiting eagerly for the next volume to appear – exactly as happened with *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*. And, of course, it meant readers paid for three books rather than one. For writers, however, publishing in this format creates problems as well as opportunities. Not the least of these is that if their thinking changes or evolves as the work develops, it is not possible to go back and rework the beginning. This may result in inconsistencies, and it could be argued that some of the difficulty readers have had in understanding the phenomenon of Dust across the three parts of *His Dark Materials*, reflects how Pullman’s ideas about it changed and deepened as he wrote. Perhaps for this reason too, he is currently writing a prequel to the trilogy titled *A History of Dust*. In adapting the trilogy for the stage, Nicholas Wright had the advantage of having read the completed work, allowing him to feed ideas developed later in Pullman’s writing process into earlier parts of his versions. Directors and actors similarly know the complete work, which affects, for instance, the character of Mrs Coulter. In *Northern Lights* she seems at best an ambiguous character; in the National Theatre production, care is taken to show her maternal feelings throughout.

In the case of specific intertexts less central than the three discussed above, an interesting question is concerned with the extent to which Pullman has made them his own. A good example is Lyra and Will’s visit to the world of the dead. McLeish (1996) claims that many different traditions have incorporated into their mythology ‘Underworlds [which are] mirror images of ours: places of non-being, non-consciousness, non-emotion, non-arriving,’ \(^7\) qualities which are certainly characteristic of the world which Will and Lyra reach. To get there they cross a lake (*The Amber Spyglass*, p.294), a journey very reminiscent of the crossing of the river Styx, which in Greek myth leads to Hades, while their surly boatman surely also owes his existence to the same mythology’s Charon. Pullman, however, adds his own individual touches: the boatman makes explicit the fact that Lyra must leave Pantalaimon behind, something which allows the author the chance to emphasise the depth of feeling which exists between Lyra and her daemon. The boatman is also used to remind readers that Will himself has a daemon, which he has never before seen since as an inhabitant of our world, Will’s daemon remains within him. Later the young people meet the Harpies (also drawn from classical mythology), fearsome winged female creatures ‘who were so hideous that their own parents were disgusted by them and hid them deep in the underworld’ (McLeish, 1996, p.240). Here, Pullman again adds an original touch – transmuting their role from that of tormenting the ghosts of the dead to that of guiding them to the opening out of the underworld that Will is about to create with the subtle knife (*The Amber Spyglass*, p.334).

Pullman’s approach to his many sources is in the spirit of Milton and Blake; Blake himself argued that ‘too much deference to a writer’s claimed inspiration, or authority, will result in reducing that author to a “church”, a mere codifier of repressive moral laws.’ \(^8\) Such a posture, whether in relation to text or institution, is precisely what Pullman rebels against.

Retellings, stories and the National Curriculum

In addition to being aware of the intertextual nature of Pullman’s writing, it is useful to think of him as part of the tradition of *retelling* ancient tales. The stories that cultures choose to
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preserve and repeat serve a purpose. They disseminate values, pass on traditions, and prop up traditional qualities such as loyalty, honour, courage, humility, duty and responsibility. These are all characteristics shared by the majority of early heroes whose stories continue to be handed down from generation to generation; and perhaps not surprisingly, they are also the kind of attributes that make for good and governable subjects and citizens. Undoubtedly that is a crucial factor behind official directives to ensure that successive generations of children are acquainted with these stories from the past.

Terry Pratchett, another award-winning fantasy writer with a crossover audience, links retelling stories to the shaping of culture and invests stories with agency in ways that can helpfully be compared to Pullman’s use of earlier texts and his investment in the power of story.

People think stories are shaped by people. In fact, it’s the other way round.

Stories can exist independently of their players. If you know that, the knowledge is power.

Stories… have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died, and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the retelling…

And their very existence overlays a faint but insistent pattern on the chaos that is history. Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story the groove runs deeper…

So a thousand heroes have stolen fire from the gods. A thousand wolves have eaten grandmother, a thousand princesses have been kissed…

Stories don’t care who takes part in them. All that matters is that the story gets told, that the story repeats. (Witches Abroad, 1991)

It is required as part of the National Curriculum that children and young people are introduced to a proportion of early texts (pre-1800). Sadly, Pratchett’s confidence in the strength of these stories is arguably misplaced. Since most British children are no longer familiar with the codes or even the syntax of earlier eras, many parents and teachers like to acquaint them with the plots of Shakespeare’s plays, Homer’s epics, or classical myths and legends before they try to tackle them in whatever version of the original they are required to study as part of their formally assessed coursework. However, these retellings are often deeply sterile; because there is an unthinking acceptance that these are stories our culture needs its children to know, they are turned into texts for children.

Like folk and fairy tales, these tales from the past were never intended for an exclusively juvenile audience. In fact, the knowledge they convey is almost entirely adult, encompassing war and adultery, faithlessness and betrayal. Horrible things happen in them. And children through the ages have listened and learned, have stored up undigested gobbets of information about passion and hatred, lust and chastity, virtue and perfidy. They might not understand them at this stage, but like intertexts, they are there to be examined.
occasionally and brought into play when the
time comes.

Sadly, they won’t get this knowledge from the
majority of retellings offered specifically to
children today. The passion is gone, along with
the perfid, and the stories are essentially
meaningless as a result. Philip Pullman’s work,
on the other hand, retains all of these qualities;
undoubtedly this is why his readers, young and
old, find *His Dark Materials* endlessly
fascinating at many levels. No other writer in
recent decades has been so frequently
interviewed in the media or the focus of debate
in secular and religious, literary and scientific,
academic and popular forums. While not
retellings in the strict sense, the volumes in this
trilogy can do much to complement and extend
understanding of both original tales and their
retold versions for young readers. Spending
some time in the worlds that make up Pullman’s
trilogy can enable the reader to understand, for
example, the structure and belief systems of
classical epics – including episodes recounting
the hero’s descent into the underworld – after
reading about Will and Lyra’s time in the Land of
the Dead; to enter into debates about free will
and the meaning of the Fall in relation to biblical
narratives, or to recognise shifting
constructions of the hero, the attractions of the
rebel, and discourses of humanism.

**Controversy and ideology: Pullman and
religion**

Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy has
been greeted by some Christians with strong
hostility. They regard the books as dangerous,
fearing that their apparent dismissal of God, the
Church and eternal life in heaven could
influence susceptible young readers against
Christian beliefs. Pullman himself, in interview,
has never held back from attacking all kinds of
fundamentalism, while his abhorrence of the
religious views underlying C.S. Lewis’s ‘Narnia’
books is well known. Is Pullman’s work really so
hostile to Christianity?

Throughout the trilogy, Pullman subjects the
Church in Lyra’s world (and, by analogy, in ours)
to a savage attack for its sterile adherence to a
code of rules, its proffering of the hope of an
illusory heaven, and indeed, its cruelty and
unscrupulousness. He bases his critique on
historical events: the burning of witches, the
cruel record of the Inquisition and the
persecution of anyone who dissented from
accepted opinion. While his harping on the evils
of the past is hardly likely to endear him to
members of the churches, the areas of dissent
become less glaring when individual doctrines
are examined.

One major area of disagreement between
Pullman and most religious writers might be
expected to lie in the portrayal of the divine.
Pullman describes himself as finding belief in ‘a
personal God and a Saviour… impossible,’ but
the image of God which he seeks to destroy is
one which is equally uncongenial to many
Christians. Particularly in *The Amber Spyglass*,
the God-figure is portrayed as giving himself
titles to which he has no claim: ‘The Authority,
God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai,
the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were
all names he gave himself’ (*The Amber
Spyglass*, p.33). Portrayal of The Authority’s
decay into nothingness is the way in which
Pullman deals with the decline of belief in an
omnipotent and omniscient deity: ‘Demented
and powerless, the aged being could only weep
and mumble… he was as light as paper… in the
open air there was nothing to stop the wind
from damaging him, and to their dismay his
form began to loosen and dissolve…’ (*The
The play

Amber Spyglass, pp. 431–2). The idea of God which Pullman is seeking to destroy here is that of a distant, arrogant, rigorous and often negative force – a very different figure from the loving God to be found in the teaching of Christ. If any parts of the Christian church have substituted a punishing, authoritarian figure for Christ’s vision, its members should be happy for Pullman to demolish this idol.

Another area where Pullman’s trilogy differs from traditional Christian theology is in the presentation of the story of the Fall not as a disaster, but as a coming of age for the human race, with his main protagonist, Lyra, becoming the new Eve. In most churches today, however, there is less emphasis on original sin and the disastrous results of the Fall, and some theologians have even seen this myth in positive terms similar to Pullman’s, holding that the development in self-knowledge which the myth figuratively describes is a necessary stage in human evolution.10

Fundamental to Pullman’s position throughout His Dark Materials is the conviction that there is no eternity in heaven to be looked towards. As we have seen, instead of the traditional view of heaven, Pullman’s mythology involves the imprisonment of the dead in an underworld, to be released by Lyra and Will, not so that they can go to heaven but rather to allow them to be dissolved into the elements of their being and be united with nature. While it would be wrong to suggest that this kind of vision of eternity resembles life with God in heaven, its emphasis on faithful love enduring forever is in no way alien to a religious vision of life.

Conclusion

It has only been possible here to touch upon a few of the many areas relevant to Pullman’s trilogy. It would be interesting to look in detail at his attitude to feminism; it is at least worth noting that we have here a male author whose major and most memorable character is female, by contrast with J.K. Rowling’s male hero, Harry Potter.

Another area which would be fruitful is that of science; Pullman has indicated that while himself a layman in this field, he has at least tried to ensure that his created universes are not incompatible with contemporary theories. In the introduction to a recent book, The Science of Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials, by Mary and John Gribbin (2003), Pullman discloses that although he was turned off science at school, he was fascinated by it at home. With chapters on subjects such as The Nature of Dust, The Magnetic Web, and Worlds Beyond Worlds, the authors hope to stimulate other children’s interest in the subject. Pullman’s use of science seems also to relate to his recognition of the importance of having a proper regard for the future of this planet. The trilogy’s concern with environmental issues has largely been sacrificed in the National Theatre productions; the need to condense the texts resulted in the excision of the whole world of the Mulefa and the issues it raises about interdependency and ecological balance.

The question remains as to why these books have proved so popular to all age-groups. One suggestion might be the way in which they belong to the ever popular genre of Romance, with their most important elements being
quests and the developing love between Lyra and Will. Extra power is added by the lovers’ enduring separation, made slightly more bearable by their continuing emotional link as they both visit the Oxford Botanic Garden, a suitable location given the feeling for nature engendered in the trilogy. 11

Another significant factor is surely the originality of the idea of daemons. The closeness between Lyra and Pantalaimon surpasses that between children and their animal companions, being perhaps more similar to the relationship between some children and their ‘imaginary friend’. The fact that this daemon is generally of the opposite sex is also compelling, and perhaps relating to an implicit recognition of the ‘anima’ (which may very approximately be defined as the female part of a male’s personality) and animus (the male part of a female’s), an idea propounded in the work of Carl Gustav Jung. Jung taught that the healthy psyche strikes a balance in this aspect as well as others he identified as central. Pullman’s trilogy offers many models for balancing aspects of the self.

A different kind of attraction results from Pullman’s transformation of Oxford. Many novels (for instance Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty Four) have been set in a future London, but the idea of an altered city being in a different universe is particularly attractive, while the architectural and academic status of Oxford makes it a splendid choice.

None of these aspects would be sufficient to attract adults and young people to the trilogy if the quality of Pullman’s writing and plot-making were not strong enough to hold interest. Legitimate criticisms might perhaps be made that some of the minor characters are a little stereotyped, as in Lee Scoresby, and even perhaps Mrs Coulter, but in such a far-reaching endeavour, simplification of some characters seems acceptable, especially as it is compensated for by other areas of strength. Particularly notable among these are Pullman’s sense of the dramatic, and his invention of new worlds.

One of the strongest features of His Dark Materials is Pullman’s creation of a sense of mystery – that we can never be quite sure as to the meaning which lies behind it all; but that in the text, as in life itself, it is vital to look beyond surface meanings. The insistence on escaping the shackles of rational, evidence-based certainty in Pullman’s work is again reminiscent of Blake and expressed in his poignant response to Isaac Newton’s account of himself:

I seem to have been only a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Blake shows Newton underwater, gazing into the shifting sands on which he is writing formulae, while all above him the great, radiant ocean of truth washes unheeded. Blake’s messages were largely ahead of his time and much of what he taught was equally disregarded. Happily, when His Dark Materials urges readers and viewers to look up, engage, question, learn, be courageous and take responsibility, the message is being heard. This may be the secret of its appeal and the reason for the National Theatre to bring it to audiences this season.
THEMES

His Dark Materials is rich in themes that can stimulate thinking and discussion.

‘The only thing about fantasy that interested me when I was writing was the freedom to invent imagery such as the daemon; but that was only interesting because I could use it to say something truthful and realistic about human nature.’ Philip Pullman (Random House website)

Love

WILL
I’ll always love you, whatever happens. When I die, I’ll drift about for ever, all my atoms, till they mix with yours.

LYRA
Every atom of you and every atom of me. Nothing will pull us apart. And when they use our atoms to make new lives, they will have to take one of yours and one of mine, we’ll be joined so tight.

(His Dark Materials Part II)

For discussion

The love story is used to frame the two parts in the National Theatre’s adaptation of the trilogy. The opening and final scenes show Will and Lyra in the Botanic Garden. It is noon on Midsummer Day. This meeting takes place at the same appointed place and time each year, though Will and Lyra, in separate worlds, are unable physically to see or touch each other. Discuss the treatment of the concept of love in His Dark Materials. Some key questions to consider:

• Consider how Will and Lyra’s love for each other grows from their first meeting through to their ultimate separation.

• How does their love affect the living and the dead?

• How does Lyra’s journey help her towards a new understanding of ‘love’?

Different groups might then discuss and prepare a retelling of one of the other love stories. Key quotations which encapsulate the quality of the love can be located in the novels or the script and incorporated into the retelling. Here are some suggested pairings and quotations:

• Mrs Coulter & Lord Asriel (e.g. Mrs. Coulter: We can wrestle with him on the edge of the gulf, and then we’ll all go down together. Lord Asriel: Marisa! final word HDM, Part II)

• Baruch & Balthamos (e.g. Forgive me. I was disabled by my grief. But one must persevere even after you’ve lost the one you love. HDM, Part II)

• Farder Coram/Serafina Pekkala (eg. Men pass in front of our eyes like butterflies, creatures of a brief season. We love them; they are brave, proud, beautiful, clever; and they die almost at once. They die so soon that our hearts are continually racked with pain. Northern Lights p. 314)

Written work and research

Alternatively, the groups might make a list of words that describe the love of their chosen characters (e.g. tenderness, sacrifice, compassion, desire etc.). These words can be written on large strips of paper and displayed around outline shapes of the characters to...
create a visual backdrop for the retellings. The words could stimulate the creation of still images that capture the essence of the word (sculpture). These images might be photographed and displayed with the word lists.

**Reflection**
In a plenary session, consider the similarities and differences in these relationships (e.g. they are all forbidden or doomed). Finally, encourage the pupils to consider how the presentation of love in *His Dark Materials* has challenged or confirmed their own ideas.

**Parents and Children**

**For discussion**
Love between parents and children can also be explored by discussing the following statements.
Will loved his mother ‘so much he would have died to protect her.’ (*The Subtle Knife*)

**MRS COULTER** I was afraid that he’d see my love for Lyra. It’s the one bit of good in me, and I don’t even know where it came from. I love her so much, my heart is bursting with it. (*HDM*, Part II)

The discussion can be extended to explore in more depth the different child/parent relationships including surrogates (e.g.

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**Exercises**

**Practical exercises and related written work**
Organise the students in small groups and give each group a key passage in which one of the parent/child relationships is depicted. Passages can be enlarged and stuck in the centre of A1 sheets of paper. After reading the passages aloud in their groups, ask the students to annotate the texts commenting on the way in which the relationship is presented. Highlighter pens might be used to pick out vocabulary/ phrases/dialogue that the students consider to be significant.

Feedback in a plenary, comparing and contrasting the different relationships (e.g. Will as carer for his mother, Mrs Coulter’s betrayal but ultimate protection of Lyra*). Display the annotated passages.

**Authority and Responsibility**

*[HDM]* depicts a struggle: the old forces of control and ritual and authority, the forces which have been embodied throughout human history in such phenomena as the Inquisition, the witch-trials, the burning of heretics, and which are still strong today in the regions of the world where religious zealots of any faith have power, are on one side; and the forces that fight against them have as their guiding principle an idea which is summed up in the words ‘The Republic of Heaven. It’s the Kingdom against the Republic.’ (Philip Pullman, Random House website)

**Introduction including practical exercises, discussion, written work and research**

In small groups, brainstorm a list of synonyms for the word authority (e.g. command, domination, government, power, permit etc.) A thesaurus might be used to extend the list and encourage the students to consider the finer nuances of meaning.

Ask the groups to consider whether there is such a thing as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ authority.

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* This activity could be combined with those under the heading Adaptation by looking at the way the character of, for example, Mrs. Coulter is changed in the play script and what pupils think this says about her love for Lyra and Lord Asriel.
Exercises

Ask them to suggest examples of both from their own experience, the texts, and knowledge of the world.

Summarise in a plenary discussion, asking each group to contribute one suggestion for ‘good authority’ and ‘bad authority’. Extend and challenge the students’ thinking by posing supplementary questions. (e.g. If authority is benign, does this necessarily mean that it is a good thing? Is it necessary to have authority within a society where everyone is equal? If so, where does the authority lie in such a society? Are rules necessary? Can rules be broken? When is it acceptable to break a rule? Are there some rules, such as ‘thou shalt not kill’, that should never be broken? Under what circumstances would you consider it acceptable to break this rule? etc.)

Consider and discuss representations of authority in His Dark Materials.

LORD ASRIEL All we know is that at some point the Authority took charge and called his domain “The Kingdom of Heaven”, and ever since then, angels have rebelled. The human beings have struggled against him too. This is the last rebellion. (HDM, Part I)

In small groups, make notes comparing and contrasting the characters in positions of authority. For example:
- Megatron and the Authority
- Iorek and Iofur
- Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel
- Serafina Pekkala/Farder Coram
- Lord Asriel/John Parry

Discuss with the class ways in which these pairings illuminate the themes of the trilogy.

How do Will and Lyra’s characters contribute to an understanding of the individual’s responsibilities in society? Consider the significance of Will’s name (free will). What does His Dark Materials have to say about free will?

In pairs, ask the students to make a list of points that could be used in an argument supporting the preservation of a Kingdom of Heaven. Then ask them to make a list of points in favour of a Republic of Heaven. Guide them towards understanding that they will need to decentre to another point of view in order to do this activity and that they are not necessarily presenting their own viewpoints. This activity could be extended by staging a debate in which some students take up the case for a Kingdom of Heaven while others take up the case for a Republic of Heaven. The remaining students are neutral and can ask questions after the speeches and vote for the most convincing argument. Afterwards, ask the students what they have learned from the process of presenting a debate.

“We hold the truth to be self evident that all men are created equal” The American Declaration of Independence.

Philip Pullman’s vision of a Republic of Heaven as revealed in His Dark Materials is a moral rather than a political one but a comparison
Exercises

with the American Declaration of Independence can be made. The Declaration can be viewed online at http://independenceroadtrip.org/Declaration/index.html

After looking at the language and the principles in the Declaration, ask the students to work in pairs to draft a ‘Declaration of Independence’ for the Republic of Heaven.

Reflection
Invite the students to consider how the performance and the study of *His Dark Materials* have informed their understanding of concepts of *authority* and *responsibility*.

Taking it Further
Other themes that could be discussed in a similar way include growing up, and the concept of ‘the soul’. Oppositional pairs of ideas such as cruelty and love, innocence and wisdom, good and evil, trust and betrayal, courage and fear might also be explored.


**Exercises**

**ADAPTATION**

*Introduction including practical exercises, discussion, written work and research*

Prior to viewing the performance, initiate a class discussion about the different processes of writing a trilogy and playscript. Extend the discussion to consider what is involved in adapting a book for the stage.

Make a list of the general challenges that have to be met in adapting a book for the theatre. For example:
- reliance on dialogue rather than narration
- physical realisation of setting using sets and staging
- budgetary constraints may impose limitations on what can be achieved
- making cuts to fit an acceptable performance time
- confines of space
- preserving something of the point of view, tone, mood of the narration

In small groups ask the students to consider the specific challenges posed by adapting *His Dark Materials* for the stage. For example:
- the convincing portrayal of characters such as the Armoured Bears
- problems of scale: the large cliff-ghasts and the tiny Gallivespian
- the space e.g. journeys, other worlds
- travel e.g. witches flying, balloons
- children’s dæmons change and move away from their humans
- Dust

In a plenary, discuss the students’ ideas and consider some of the ways in which these challenges might be met. For instance, what can be done to create the effect of witches flying? How might the dæmons be realized in the production?

Working individually or in pairs, ask the students to choose a character – e.g. Lord Asriel, Mrs Coulter, Iorek Byrnison, Serafina Pekkala, Balthamos, Lee Scoresby – and locate key passages featuring the characters (alternatively these might be prepared and copied for them). Ask the students to read the passages, highlighting and annotating anything that provides useful information about the character (e.g. appearance, behaviour, attitudes and values etc). Ask them to use the information to develop a concept/costume design for the character (visit the companion website at www.stagework.org.uk to see examples from the National’s production). Words, phrases and sentences from the text can be used to annotate the designs. Guide the students towards understanding the interpretative nature of the task.

After the performance, compare the stage adaptation with the trilogy. Points for comparison might include the opening, a key scene, interpretation of character, how the challenges identified above were dealt with, etc.

Compare the opening of *Northern Lights* with the opening of *His Dark Materials*. 

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![Patricia Hodge (as Mrs Coulter)](image)

*photo Ivan Kynd*
Exercises

- Were there any surprises?
- Why do they think Nicholas Wright chose to start the play in The Botanic Garden?

Extend the students’ thinking by asking them to consider the differences between producing film and stage versions. Consider the comparative advantages and disadvantages. For example:

- immediacy of stage performance
- living performance can adapt and evolve, building on audience response
- special effects and digital wizardry in films can overcome many of the difficulties mentioned, such as problems of scale and the daemons’ transformations
- multiple viewpoints through use of camera angles and shots (Pullman also uses film-like techniques in his narration, zooming in and then pulling back from scenes)

Alternatively, compare stage and radio dramatisation. Points for consideration include:

- sound effects for suggesting action which will be intrusive if there are too many
- use of musical themes to elicit audience reaction: mood, setting character
- characterisation through voice
- the possibility of using some narration to replace stage direction

Building on the discussion, ask the students to take a key scene and in groups plan stage, film and radio adaptations of the scene.
Exercises

FANTASY WORLDS
The first volume is set “in a universe like ours, but different in many ways.” (Northern Lights)

Introduction, including practical exercises, discussion, written work and research
Using the internet and sources, research some of the places that Philip Pullman uses as settings for His Dark Materials (e.g. Oxford, Svalbard, Vauxhall).

Share the following quotation with the students: ‘Fantasy, of course, allows you to change things into other things as much as you like. The part of Oxford known as Jericho is, in real life, thoroughly respectable: terraces of small Victorian houses built for labourers, now occupied by young professionals and their families… However, the area has always struck me as having a hidden character, more raffish and jaunty altogether, with an air of horse-trading, minor crime, and a sort of fairgroundish bohemianism. That is the Jericho I describe in the story.’ (Philip Pullman, Random House website)

Discuss ways in which Pullman takes a familiar place and makes it strange.

Writing
Ask the students to think of a place that they know well. Then ask them to imagine that place in a new light so that it begins to take on different characteristics, in a similar way to that described by Philip Pullman (above). Invite them to share ideas with a talk partner and encourage them to ask each other questions to extend ideas. After talking, ask the students to write place descriptions. Extend the idea by writing a story in this familiar but strange world that has been created.
**Stories and Storytelling**

"Stories are the most important thing in the world. Without stories, we wouldn’t be human beings at all." (Philip Pullman, Random House website)

**Introduction including practical exercises, discussion, written work and research**

Telling stories is a recurring theme in *His Dark Materials*.

- Discuss the place of storytelling within the novels (e.g. the children frightening each other with stories about the Gobblers, Ma Costa telling Lyra the story of her parentage and early life etc.)
- Discuss the attributes of storytelling that are present in the writing of the trilogy (e.g. emphasis on plot or theme: ‘there are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction’. Philip Pullman, Random House website)

**Telling and writing stories**

Start by telling stories from personal experience. Ask the students to remember a frightening experience, or a time when they told a lie and were found out, or a time when they were told off but didn’t think it was justified. Ask them to recall how they felt and then tell their story to a partner, exactly as they remember it happening.

After the activity, ask them what they enjoyed about listening to each other’s stories, and highlight some of the pleasures of the story.

"Stories must begin somewhere. Out of the welter of events and ideas and pictures and characters and voices that you experience in your head, you the storyteller must choose one moment, the best moment, and make that the start." (Philip Pullman in James Carter’s *Creating Writers* London: Routledge, 2001, p.97)

Ask pupils to think about some of the differences between writing and telling a story. If they were going to write the story they have just told, where would they begin? At the beginning? At the end (as in Nicholas Wright’s adaptation of *His Dark Materials*)?

“It really does help to know that surprise is the precise opposite of suspense. Surprise is when something happens that you don’t expect: suspense is when something doesn’t happen that you do expect.” (Phillip Pullman in James Carter’s *Creating Writers* London: Routledge, 2001, p.142)

Explore how Philip Pullman creates suspense and surprise in the trilogy. Identify two key scenes, one showing the build up of suspense and another showing surprise; ask pupils to annotate and discuss the passages.

After discussion, ask the students to produce written versions of their stories, thinking about how they will start their stories, build suspense and create surprise as appropriate. Share and evaluate the group’s stories.

**Lyra The Storyteller**

In a story circle, tell the story about the return from the Land of the Dead from Lyra’s point of view. Each student tells part of the story and passes it on to the person on her/his left to continue. An object such as ‘an alethiometer’ could be passed around the circle as a signal to reinforce who is telling the story. Afterwards, consider whether Will’s story would be the same or different.
Exercises

LANGUAGE
Writers of fantasy often use vocabulary and language in interesting and original ways. Make a study of the language used in His Dark Materials, for example the apposite use of names. Names might be chosen for their euphony and because they are suggestive of particular qualities and characteristics. Lyra, for instance can be easily transposed into liar, but it also carries with it connotations of music (the lyre) and is a constellation (see page 7 for a comparison to Blake’s Lyca). Names might also be chosen to provide a sense of geographical authenticity; Philip Pullman uses compound Norse words to this effect e.g. Panserbjørne (bjørne = bear, pansr = armour). Make a list of names and consider some of the associations suggested by them.

Extend this work by studying other instances of Pullman’s use of original words, for example the use of scientific vocabulary. Students might produce a glossary of original words.
Further research

Selected Resources and Bibliography
• Fully illustrated backstage account of how Pullman’s trilogy was brought to the stage of the National Theatre.
nationaltheatre.org.uk/bookshop

• Award-winning science writers explore and explain the scientific theories that lie behind some of the ideas in His Dark Materials. Topics include spacetime, quantum physics, chaos theory, the meaning of truth and the unconscious mind

• The genre of alternative world fantasy is considered with reference to three writers including Philip Pullman

• Includes a short biography, a thematically organised study guide, discussion questions, suggestions for further reading, and research

• Nicholas Tucker discusses the sources that have influenced Philip Pullman and the themes that are explored and developed in his stories. Includes a who’s who of His Dark Materials and gives answers to frequently asked questions including an explanation of the elusive nature of Dust

Websites
Random House (USA) Microsite
www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman
• Author information including questions and answers and writing advice
• Teachers’ and readers’ guides for each of the books in His Dark Materials Trilogy
• How to read the alethiometer

BBC Radio 4
www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/hisdarkmaterials/index.shtml
• Website devoted to the Radio 4 dramatisation.
• Listen to the characters’ voices and musical themes. This dramatisation is available on audio cassette. Useful for comparing the stage and audio adaptations (visual and auditory realisations).

Bridge to the Stars
www.bridgetothestars.net
• Fan site with extensive news coverage including information about the forthcoming film. A first stop for up-to-date information about all aspects His Dark Materials
• Wide range of international cover art which could be used for comparative study
• Images of Oxford, Svalbard, The Botanic Garden useful for context building and work on the creation of settings.

His Dark Materials.org
www.hisdarkmaterials.org
• Fan site offering information about the books, adaptations and other resources, as well as up-to-date reviews and discussion boards.
• From Alethiometer through to Zalif, the ‘Encyclopaedia Materiarum’ includes useful definitions of terms contained in the His Dark Materials books.
Notes


2 All the audio diaries kept during rehearsals for *His Dark Materials* can be read at the related website, www.stagework.org.uk.

3 Much of this biographical information is drawn from Nicholas Tucker’s *Darkness Visible* (2003), a useful complementary resource.

4 An English translation of this is reproduced in Nicholas Tucker’s *Darkness Visible* (2003).


6 *The Republic of Heaven* (p. 664).


10 Primavesi (1991) p. 226

11 A similarly romantic liaison of lovers separated by being in different worlds occurs at the conclusion of Susan Price’s *The Sterkarm Handshake* (1998).