



# Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Golden Compass  
By Philip Pullman  
*Discussed February 2000*

## Discussion Questions

1. Terry Brooks has called this book "an epic fantasy in the tradition of Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis, James Barrie, L. Frank Baum, and J.R.R. Tolkien." Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. This book is frequently advertised as a "children's book" or YA (young adult) novel. Does it "work" on that level; or should it be directed more toward adult readers? What elements in the novel can you point out to support your opinion?
3. Can this volume stand alone? In other words, what would you feel about this book if you didn't know there were two more volumes in the "Dark Materials" trilogy?
4. It's said that a good novel tells the story of a protagonist's journey of discovery - specifically, of self-discovery. Does Lyra Belacqua learn anything from her journey?
5. One of the most significant fantasy elements in this novel is the existence of the "daemons." What are they? Why do daemons eventually settle into one shape? Why the "great taboo" against touching someone else's daemon? Can you cite any parallels in mythology, folklore, or other F&SF works?
6. Pullman frequently invents different words for things which also exist in our world, for example: gyptians, chocolatl, brantwijn, anbaric power, Chthonic Railway. How did the use of such words affect your reading of the novel?
7. In Lyra's world, science and technology appear to be exclusively under the supervision of the Church. Did you find this aspect of the book as "fantastical" as the existence of the daemons? Does it require an unreasonable "suspension of disbelief" on the reader's part?