

Northern Lights (The Golden Compass), Philip Pullman, 1995

Fantasy vs reality	Northern Lights is set in a fantasy world, but it also has elements of real life – certain places, ideas and characters have a strong resemblance to our own world. Daemons are like the Christian belief in souls, there is religious control like England when Blake was alive, Victorian traditions and government, but also modern technology.	Lyra Belacqua	The protagonist, an 11 year old girl who is raised at Oxford University. Lyra has many dualities: brave but wise; masculine and feminine; working and upper class. Lyra is forced into adventure by the arrival of Gobblers, and discovers more about her real identity.	Idyllic	Too good to be true
				Matriarch	Female leader
				Subvert	Go against rules
				Conform	Follow expectations
				Exploit	Mistreat for gain
Free will	The most common philosophical question – are we free to choose our own actions or are we controlled by God, fate or consequence? Just how free are we, and if we aren't free then what controls us?	Pantalaimon	Lyra's daemon who, like all children's' daemons, has the ability to shapeshift though often takes the form of an ermine. He is a nervous contrast to Lyra's bold and courageous nature.	Patriarchy	Men over women
				Innocence	Purity
				Corruption	Evil; dirty
Knowledge and science	For centuries people put their faith in superstition and religion to explain the world, but the rise of science in the 17 th century led to new discoveries and understanding of how the world works. Does science go to far though? Are we meant to know and control everything or is this a power limited for God?	Lord Asriel	Lyra's uncle, an upper class man with a mysterious life who rarely visits Lyra. His courage is often inspiration for Lyra.	Oppression	Pushed down
		Stelmaria	Lord Asriel's daemon, a snow leopard.	Authority	In charge
		Mrs Coulter	A powerful figure in the Magisterium which is part of the church, she takes Lyra with her on her journey to The North but causes several problems for Lyra along the way. She has a naughty golden monkey for a daemon.	Rebel	Disobey authority
Religion	Religion helps us understand the world and gives us rules to live by, but organised religion can also be a powerful political force. Religion can force people to live a certain way and make certain choices.			Sedition	Illegal criticism
				Heroism	Bravery; courage
				Hegemony	Exclusive power group
Gender	In many societies, men and women are supposed to follow strict expectations. Male leaders should be physically strong, violent and controlling. Women should be obedient, domestic and gentle. Transgressive women are often viewed as dangerous.	lorek Byrnison	An armoured bear and true heir to the throne of the panserbjorne (the race of armoured bears), lorek has been outcast from his home for murder and joins Lyra's team.	Class	Position in society
		John Faa	Lord of the Western Gyptians who are a race of travellers who live on canal boats. He is very close with Farder Coram.	Gender	Male, female, other
				Salvation	Being saved
Innocence and experience	'Dust' is treated by The Gobblers as similar to Blake's concept of 'experience'. Children are born 'innocent' and pure, but as they grow up they are corrupted by Dust which causes sin and temptation.	Farder Coram	An old wise Gyptian who offers wisdom and guidance to Lyra.	Allusion	Reference
				Tyrant	Cruel ruler
				Totalitarian	Total control
Original Sin	A Christian belief that all humans are born with sin and corruption as an innate part of their soul and therefore need salvation. The Gobblers promise salvation through intercession.	Ma Costa	A fierce Gyptian woman whose son, Billy, is kidnapped by The Gobblers. She helps Lyra on her adventure, acting as a mother.	Vulnerable	Exposed to harm
		Serafina Pekkala	A queen of a clan of witches. Like all witches, her daemon has the special ability of travelling far away from its person. Her daemon is a goose and often acts as a messenger for Lyra. Not all witches are on Lyra's side.	Pastoral	Relating to nature
				Spiritual	Relating to soul
Social class	Like real life, the world in 'Northern Lights' is split into social classes. Lyra has a duality of working and upper class that enables her to access different parts of society more easily than most people.			Earthly	Non-spiritual; physical
				Experience	Knowledge; corruption
				Abandon	Leave on purpose
Loyalty	The protagonists of the novel often have a key attribute in common – they are loyal to each other. The antagonists are typically manipulative, deceitful and often betray Lyra. Lyra's childhood vulnerability is often exploited by the adults she trusts.	Lee Scoresby	An American hot air balloon pilot and a great warrior with his pistol who is motivated by money but learns loyalty from Lyra.	Duplicitous	Two-faced
		Iofur Ragnison	An armoured bear who wants to be human. Bears don't have daemons so Iofur will do anything to get one. He is also the king of the panserbjorne since he exiled lorek Byrnison.	Militancy	Violence for politics
				Allegory	Story with message
Identity	Lyra's identity is formed by her experience – she develops over the course of the novel as she moves away from Jordan College and is forced to grow up very quickly in order to survive.	Roger Parslow	Lyra's friend from Oxford. When he is kidnapped by The Gobblers, Lyra vows to save him.	Emancipate	To free someone
				Heresy	Criticise church
				Abolition	Get rid of completely
Fate and determinism	Fate is the belief that our lives are controlled by a mysterious power. Throughout the novel there are indications that Lyra was born to go on this adventure.	The Master of Jordan College	The head of the college where Lyra grows up, The Master is very protective of Lyra.	Brutality	Cruelty; violence
				Confine	Trap
				<i>"You cannot change what you are, only what you do."</i>	