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## *La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust Volume One* by Philip Pullman: Q&As

### 1. Is the book titled *La Belle Sauvage* or *The Book of Dust*?

*La Belle Sauvage* is the first volume in a body of work titled *The Book of Dust*, in the same way that *Northern Lights* was the first book in *His Dark Materials*. The full title of the book is *La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust Volume One*.

### 2. Why is the book called *La Belle Sauvage*?

*La Belle Sauvage* is the name of a canoe belonging to the book's protagonist, Malcolm Polstead, which is itself named after a famous inn. As Malcolm explains, the inn sign 'was a picture of a beautiful lady, and she'd done something brave, but I don't know what it was.' There was a real inn in London which had had that name since medieval times.

### 3. Who is Malcolm?

Malcolm is an 11-year old boy who lives in Oxford alongside the river Thames. We are introduced to him and his dæmon, Asta, in *La Belle Sauvage*.

### 4. Where else does Malcolm appear?

Philip Pullman says: "We see a lot more of Malcolm in the later volumes of *The Book of Dust*. He had a walk-on part in another book, but I'm not saying which, and in any case you have to look carefully."

### 5. What is the translation of *La Belle Sauvage*?

'La Belle Sauvage' translates roughly from French to English as 'the wild beauty' or 'the beautiful savage'.

### 6. What is a dæmon?

Pronounced 'demon', a dæmon is the animal embodiment of a human's inner-life and thought. During the childhood of its associated human, a dæmon can change its shape at will, but with the onset of adolescence it settles into a fixed, final form that reveals the person's true nature and personality.

### 7. Who is Dr Relf?

Dr Relf is a mutual acquaintance of Malcolm and Lord Asriel. She is part of a special group studying the Bodley Library alethiometer, and finds herself drawn into

Malcolm's adventure after Malcolm stumbles across the acorn in Chapter 2. She is also a member of Oakley Street, a secret agency for whom she answers questions using the alethiometer (Chapter 5). Oakley Street is headed up by former Lord Chancellor, Lord Nugent.

**8. What is Godstow Priory?**

Godstow Priory is an abbey situated across the river Thames from the Trout Inn where Malcolm lives. It is home to an order of nuns who have been entrusted to take care of baby Lyra. Malcolm regularly visits to help the nuns with odd jobs.

**9. Why is Lord Asriel barred from seeing his child?**

In *Northern Lights*, it is revealed that Lord Asriel killed a man and, as a result, the High Court has ruled that he is barred from seeing his baby daughter, Lyra. Malcolm assists Lord Asriel when he visits Godstow Priory under cover of night and lends him *La Belle Sauvage* so he can make a quick getaway.

**10. How much does the book cost?**

The RRP of the hardback and e-book is £20. The audiobook, read by Michael Sheen, is also priced £20. All are published and available to buy from Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

**11. How much of the book does Lord Asriel feature in?**

Lord Asriel features in *La Belle Sauvage*, along with his snow leopard dæmon, Stelmaria, at a couple of points in the book.

**12. Do any other characters from *His Dark Materials* - such as Will Parry or Mrs Coulter - appear in the new book?**

Returning characters include: Lyra and Pantalaimon; Lord Asriel and Stelmaria; Mrs Coulter and her golden monkey dæmon, and Farder Coram and Sophonax.

**13. What is the plot of the new book?**

*La Belle Sauvage* returns to the Oxford inhabited by Lyra Belacqua in *Northern Lights*, but opens 10 years earlier. Lyra, only a baby, is in danger and being sheltered by the nuns of Godstow Priory. Her father, Lord Asriel, is banned from seeing her by the High Court, but he is not the only character to threaten her existence. The unlikely hero of this story is 11-year-old Malcolm Polstead and his dæmon, Asta, who becomes Lyra's protector following a massive flood that threatens to devastate the UK. He and his trusty canoe, *La Belle Sauvage*, take centre stage in a cast of characters, which includes new faces such as alethiometer specialist Dr Hannah Relf, as well as old favourites including Farder Coram.

As with *His Dark Materials*, *La Belle Sauvage* takes as its inspiration the historic streets, buildings and waterways of Oxford, Pullman's long-term home. Recognisable locations include the Bodleian Library's Duke Humfrey's Library, the Trout Inn and

Godstow Nunnery at Wolvercote and Exeter College, Philip's college and the model for Jordan College in his books.

#### 14. What is Dust?

Dust is central to *His Dark Materials*. People discover it, study it or seek to destroy it. Philip Pullman calls it a metaphor. Some say it's dark matter; others – like the Magisterium – say it's evidence of original sin. In the books, it's often connected to the change from childhood to adulthood, through puberty – when people's dæmon s take on a fixed shape.

#### 15. Is this a sequel / prequel to *His Dark Materials*?

No, it is a companion work. Philip Pullman calls it an "equal" that sits alongside *His Dark Materials*. *The Book of Dust* is a work in three parts, like *His Dark Materials*, and the first volume will be published this Autumn. The work can be read on its own, without having to have read the original series. This volume and the next will cover two parts of Lyra's life: starting at the beginning of her story, 10 years before *Northern Lights*, and returning to her 20 years later. The scope of the third volume is still under wraps.

#### 16. Where is *La Belle Sauvage* set?

The book is set between Oxford and London, in the same parallel Britain (or Brytain) that Lyra Belacqua inhabits. Many of the locations featured in the new book are inspired by real-life places that you can visit, including:

- **Bodleian Library:** Bodley's Library featured prominently in *His Dark Materials* and also features in the new book, *La Belle Sauvage* (Chapter 5).
- **Godstow Abbey:** referenced as Godstow Priory in *La Belle Sauvage* - an abbey where the nuns look after the baby Lyra (Chapter 3).
- **Jericho:** where Dr Hannah Relf lives in *La Belle Sauvage* and where some of the action takes place (Chapter 1).
- **The Trout Inn, Wolvercote:** where Malcolm lives with his parents, the landlords, in *La Belle Sauvage* (Chapter 1).

You can read more about other locations that feature in *La Belle Sauvage* and *His Dark Materials*, as well as a tour of the different locations run by Experience Oxfordshire, [here](#).

#### 17. Is *La Belle Sauvage* a children's or an adult book?

As with the original series, this is a book that can be read by children and adults alike. It is being published by Penguin Random House Children's in the UK and Random House Children's Books in the US but, as with Philip's works in general, the book is complex and multi-layered and can be read by adult readers as well. Philip Pullman has said previously that he doesn't set out to write for any particular

audience – child or adult – but that he hopes that his work will appeal to a range of readers of all ages.

**18. Will Philip Pullman be creating any original artwork for the new book?**

No, but British illustrator Chris Wormell has designed the cover and the chapter heads.

**19. What background reading is connected to the world of *His Dark Materials*?**

There are six books. The three that form the *His Dark Materials* trilogy – *Northern Lights*, *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass* – and three companion stories, *Lyra's Oxford*, *Once Upon a Time in the North* and *The Collectors*.

However, for those new to the series, the first volume of *The Book of Dust* can be read as a brand new novel and a story in its own right.

A full bibliography can be found on Philip Pullman's website: [www.philip-pullman.com](http://www.philip-pullman.com)

Laurie Frost's *The Elements of His Dark Materials* is a definitive encyclopaedia of all things *His Dark Materials*.

**20. What adaptations have appeared?**

Jack Thorne – who worked with JK Rowling on the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* – is adapting the trilogy for BBC One, with production company Bad Wolf, who have worked on series including *Doctor Who*. The series is in pre-production, due to air in 2018. In a recent interview for the *Radio Times*, Jack Thorne said: "It's at an exciting point where we're just throwing things at the page and trying to work out what works and what doesn't ... the most important thing is being loyal to the books, and trying to tell those books as well as we possibly can."

In 2007, Philip Pullman narrated an unabridged audiobook and in 2003 the BBC turned the books into a radio drama for BBC Radio 4. In 2004, Nicholas Hytner directed an acclaimed theatre adaptation by Nicholas Wright at the National Theatre and a film adaptation of *Northern Lights*, entitled *The Golden Compass*, directed by Chris Weitz, was released in 2007.

**21. Is *La Belle Sauvage* available now?**

The book is available in bookshops from Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October.

**22. What is an Alethiometer?**

An alethiometer is a 'truth teller'. It is a rare device first seen in *His Dark Materials* which resembles a four-handed pocket watch. It can truthfully answer any possible question asked by a skilled user.

**23. What is the Magisterium?**

The Magisterium is also referred to as The Church. First introduced in *His Dark Materials*, The Magisterium is the most powerful institution in Lyra's world.

**24. What is the CCD?**

The CCD is an acronym for the Consistorial Court of Discipline, which is an agency of The Church concerned with heresy and unbelief.

**25. How many pages long is *La Belle Sauvage*?**

The book is 560 pages long.

**26. How is the launch of *La Belle Sauvage* being celebrated?**

There are many plans to celebrate the launch of *La Belle Sauvage*, including a launch event at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, midnight openings at book stores across the country and numerous signings and events with Philip Pullman himself. You can find more details of plans to celebrate the publication of the book [here](#).

**27. Why is the book being launched at the Bodleian Library in Oxford?**

The Bodley Library features in *His Dark Materials* and *La Belle Sauvage*. In the new book, it is where a rare alethiometer is kept and protected from the Magisterium (see Chapter 4). Philip Pullman is a huge supporter of libraries and has a long history with the Bodleian Library, so it felt like a fitting venue for the launch.

**28. How old is Philip Pullman?**

Philip will celebrate his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October, the same day that *La Belle Sauvage* is published.

**29. Is there a reason the book is being published on Philip's birthday?**

No, this is just a happy coincidence.

**30. Why is the book embargoed until publication?**

Fans have been waiting a long time for this new book and we didn't want anything to spoil the surprise ahead of them being able to read it for themselves.