

**Subject :** LITERATURE

**Topic:** Fantasy in Literature

**Addressee:** secondary school students ( age 15-16)

**Timing:** 2 50-minute-lessons

**Type of activities:** listening, reading, writing and speaking

**Key Vocabulary/ Useful language :** • novel • writer • author • beginning • atmosphere • trilogy • embodiment • character • to convey  
• to find out • to sum up

### Teacher's Notes

#### Warming Up

- Students are asked to talk about their preferred types of readings and/or if they like fantasy. Give examples.

#### Presentation

- Students listen to an extract from Northern Lights, a novel by Philip Pulmann. Give the text (1) and decide if they can read while listening or read the text after the reading.
- They have to complete a while- listening task and a post- reading one. (1)
- Group or class check

#### Practice/ Follow- up

- The students are now asked to read and learn more about the book. Give photocopy. (2)
- Then they have to do a vocabulary task to find out more specific words related to fantasy and literature.
- A second task follows to be able to generate sentences about the topic and be more autonomous when talking about it. Give photocopy.

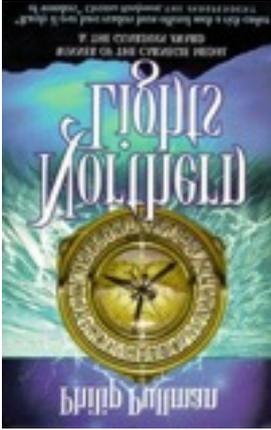
#### Production

- This the stage when the students work more autonomously and do research. Give photocopy (3) . This can be done at school or at home.
- The last task is a speaking task which is more personal and not really related to literature.

LESSON MATERIAL

(1)

**Listen & Read**



## Northern Lights

This is the beginning of *Northern Lights*, also known as *The Golden Compass*, a novel written by the English writer, Philip Pullman.

1 While listening and reading the text, note down:

- who is Lyra with .....
- where they are .....
- why they hide .....

Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen. The three great tables that ran the length of the hall were laid already, the silver and the glass catching what little light there was, and the long benches were pulled out ready for the guests. Portraits of former Masters hung high up in the gloom along the walls

Lyra reached the dais and looked back at the open kitchen door, and, seeing no one, stepped up beside the high table. The places here were laid with gold, not silver, and the fourteen seats were not oak benches but mahogany chairs with velvet cushions.

Lyra stopped beside the Master's chair and flicked the biggest glass gently with a fingernail. The sound rang clearly through the hall.

"You're not taking this seriously," whispered her daemon. "Behave yourself."

Her daemon's name was Pantalaimon, and he was currently in the form of a moth, a dark brown one so as not to show up in the darkness of the hall.

"They're making too much noise to hear from the kitchen," Lyra whispered back. "And the Steward doesn't come in till the first bell. Stop fussing."

But she put her palm over the ringing crystal anyway, and Pantalaimon fluttered ahead and through the slightly open door of the Retiring Room at the other end of the dais. After a moment he appeared again.

"There's no one there," he whispered. "But we must be quick."

Crouching behind the high table, Lyra darted along and through the door into the Retiring Room, where she stood up and looked around. The only light in here came from the fireplace, where a bright blaze of logs settled slightly as she looked, sending a fountain of sparks up into the chimney. She had lived most of her life in the College, but had never seen the Retiring Room before: only Scholars and their guests were allowed in here, and never females. Even the maid-servants didn't clean in here. That was the Butler's job alone.

Pantalaimon settled on her shoulder.

"Happy now? Can we go?" he whispered.

"Don't be silly! I want to look around!"

It was a large room, with an oval table of polished rosewood on which stood various decanters and glasses, and a silver smoking stand with a rack of pipes. On a sideboard nearby there was a little chafing dish and a basket of poppy heads.

"They do themselves well, don't they, Pan?" she said under her breath.

She sat in one of the green leather armchairs. It was so deep she found herself nearly lying down, but she sat up again and tucked her legs under her to look at the portraits on the walls. More old Scholars, probably; robed, bearded, and gloomy, they stared out of their frames in solemn disapproval.

"What d'you think they talk about?" Lyra said, or began to say, because before she'd finished the question she heard voices outside the door.

"Behind the chair—quick!" whispered Pantalaimon, and in a flash Lyra was out of the armchair and crouching behind it. It wasn't the best one for hiding behind: she'd chosen one in the very centre of the room, and unless she kept very quiet...

The door opened, and the light changed in the room; one of the incomers was carrying a lamp, which he put down on the sideboard. Lyra could see his legs, in their dark green trousers and shiny black shoes. It was a servant.

Then a deep voice said, "Has Lord Asriel arrived yet?"

It was the Master. As Lyra held her breath, she saw the servant's daemon (a dog, like all servants' daemons) trot in and sit quietly at his feet, and then the Master's feet became visible too, in the shabby black shoes he always wore.

"No, Master," said the Butler.

**2 Read the extract again.**

- a) find out all the information about Pantalaimon. Why does he encourage Lyra to leave the room?
- b) focus on the furniture. What type of room is it? How does the writer convey its sinister atmosphere?
- c) who enters the room? What are they talking about?

**3 PW Talk to your partner. What is Lyra doing in the room? What does she want to find out?**

(2)

**4. Learn more about Northern Lights.**

A **dæmon** is a manifestation of a person's **soul** in the **Philip Pullman** trilogy *His Dark Materials*. In those universes dæmons exist external to the human in the form of animals representative of the person's personality, although children's dæmons may change form. The bond between dæmon and human is intimate, and dæmons must remain within a small distance of their human. A dæmon is part of its human's soul; it can talk and express their shared conscience.

**Lyra**, a dark-blond girl aged 12 at the beginning of the trilogy, is the daughter of **Lord Asriel** and **Marisa Coulter**. She was brought up at Jordan College, with the Scholars, the Professors, and the Servants all acting as a sort of collective family. She was raised believing that her father was a count and her mother a countess, that both her parents had died in an airship crash, and that **Lord Asriel** was her uncle. She later learned the truth.

Lyra's **dæmon**, **Pantalaimon**, is her dearest companion and the embodiment of her soul. In common with all dæmons of children, he can take any animal form he pleases; he first appears in the story in the shape of a dark brown moth. He changes into many forms throughout the series, ranging from a **leopard** to a **dragon**, but his favourite forms are a snow-white ermine, a moth, a wildcat and a mouse.

### Words and fantasy

#### 5 Find the words below in the grid.

armor	enchanted	kiss	shield
arrow	evil	knight	spell
bow	fairy	magic	sword
castle	fairytale	mermaid	troll
dragon	frog	ogre	unicorn
dungeon	giant	pirate	witch
dwarf	goblin	princess	wizard
elf			



#### 6 Listen and complete with the words you hear.

*\*science fiction, which is a different genre*

*\*anything that is not possible in the real world*

*\*bring about growth in characters*

*\*Mystery, Westerns, Mainstream, Romantic, Science Fiction*

\*created a large interest      \*all fiction is fantasy      \*as an expansion of each reader's horizons

\*quests, heroes, magic, gods, mythical creatures and adventure \*to gain insights about being human \*struggles between good and evil, light and dark, or law and chaos

Fantasy is one of the oldest genres, going back at least to Hellenistic Greece which include(1) ....., and so on. Some of the first Fantasy stories are "Gilgamesh" from Babylon, the Iliad and Odyssey by Homer and the Aeneid by Virgil from the Roman Empire.

The common patterns in these stories of (2) .....form the basis of the genre today.

The popularity of the blockbuster movies, "Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring" and "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," (3) .....in Fantasy books.

In recent years the genre has grown so large that several different sub-categories now exist. Finding a fantasy book in a bookstore to read can be daunting. First, fantasy books are usually combined with (4) ..... Also, there are media tie-in books and books based on role playing game systems. These can be fun to read, but don't have the depth or sense of wonder true fantasy literature can provide.

But, what is fantasy?

Most people agree that (5) .....since all fiction is made up stories about unreal characters. However, fiction has realistic plots and characters while fantasy deals with the impossible.

Fantasy is a genre that has magic, secondary worlds, mythical creatures, quests, and great battles between good and evil in most of the books. Common elements in the genre are dragons, wizards, elves, trolls and other imaginary characters. Some books have minimal fantastic elements, but (6) .....is considered fantasy.

Some of the main themes in fantasy are:

- Quests, both internal and external.
- (7) .....
- Heroism.
- Coming of age.

Quests help the characters to grow as they strive for an object or ideal. The struggles between opposing forces are to achieve or restore balance to the world. Themes of heroism and coming of age (8) .....

Reading Fantasy doesn't teach magic to people. Fantasy is a genre (9) .....or exploring the human soul by taking us out of the real world.It is not so much an escape from the here-and-now (10) .....

(3)

7

The Italian writer and essayist Italo Calvino had distinguished between two kinds of fantasy.

What he defined 'fantastico visionario' and 'fantastico mentale'.

The former deals with ghosts, monster, fairies- everything which goes beyond the human.

The latter deals with the individual inner being and the interiority of daily life.

**Find information about some of his works related to the genre, such as *Marcovaldo*, *The Cloven Viscount*, *The Baron in the Trees* or *Invisible cities* and write an essay about why and how Calvino can be considered a fantasy writer. Provide evidence and examples.**

**8      Speaking      Talk to your partner and answer.**

What would you do if you had a daemon? What would you tell him? What would you ask him/her to do for you?