

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016
Massachusetts Center for the Book
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Level II Honors Award

Dear Philip Pullman,

On the whole, I don't cry a lot while reading or watching movies, not because they are not sad or good, but just because I can't seem to make myself cry. Your book The Amber Spyglass, however, made me silently sob in the back of my car as I finished the last pages of it. Hot tears ran down my face as I read about Lyra and Will being separated forever. I could not stop thinking about your book even weeks after I finished it. Normally once I finish a book a week later I could not tell someone who the main character was, or how it ended, but months after reading your book I still remember every part of it. How I read it as much as possible: in class, in the car, on the bus, as I walked from the bus stop to my house, whenever I had a spare moment. The ending of The Amber Spyglass and its host of amazing characters will make me never forget your book. Your book was not just a great book it also changed me, and made me think much more deeply about power and what it means to be a kid or an adult.

As I read the first two books of the *His Dark Materials* series, I was reading them just for pleasure, but when I got to your third book in the series, The Amber Spyglass, I started to see the messages in the book. The biggest message to me was that just because something is powerful does not mean they are always right or good. In the beginning of the book, Lord Asriel states his plan to attack the authority or God, this surprised me because you can't really attack God. It showed me I can attack people in power who are unjust like people in my life who abuse their power. Your book taught me that even people in the highest of power can be corrupt or bad, so we have to make sure that whoever is in power is good and fair. If they are not good then we should try to change or replace them like Lord Asriel's rebellion did.

The Amber Spyglass has also shown me that if you really want to change something and make the world a better place then you have to be willing to sacrifice something. In your book Will and Lyra are forced to leave each other forever to save the dead souls and to make sure the dust does not drain from the world and make creativity and goodness to cease indefinitely. When I was reading that part of the book I started silently crying because they had just realized how much they truly loved each other when they give up their love for the greater good. At the time I did not get the message behind them sacrificing their love just so the dead would be happy, but as I lay in my bed later that night thinking about your book I realized that they gave up their love because they believed the dead needed an escape from their prison more than Will and Lyra needed each other. They were willing to sacrifice anything for a cause, making me realize that in any cause you really care about you have to be willing to sacrifice something.

My favorite part of your book was definitely the characters' demons or soul mates in animal form. I have always wanted something that is always there for me and knows my every thought. The demons however were not just cool they showed me the power of being a kid. In your book as you got older your demon would go from being able to change form to settling in one shape for the rest of your life. When your demon stops changing you become an adult, but to me it seemed that your demon stops changing because you stop changing and settle into what you are going to be as an adult. As a kid, though you are free, you have not settled into your final form, and you can still be whatever you want. Being a kid makes you free to be whatever you want.

Philip Pullman, because of your book I have learned many life lessons so thank you very much. I loved reading The Amber Spyglass and the others in the series at all times of day and night. The characters and the plot are some of the best I have ever read about. The Amber Spyglass was not just one of the best books I have ever read, but it also taught me many important life lessons.

Sincerely,

Keegan

Keegan
Cambridge
Grade 7