

We've got our first glimpse of BBC's His Dark Materials and it looks glorious

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New adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy coming soon to HBO and BBC.

The BBC has dropped the first teaser for its forthcoming eight-part adaptation of Sir Philip Pullman's beloved fantasy trilogy, *His Dark Materials*. It's mostly just a quick glimpse of several major characters, but it does give us a sense of the glorious look and tone of the new series.

(Mild spoilers for the Philip Pullman trilogy below.)

First published in 1995, the three books in the series are *The Golden Compass* (published as *Northern Lights* in the U.K.), *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*. They follow the adventures of a 12-year-old girl named Lyra, who lives in a fictional version of Oxford, England, circa the Victorian era. Everyone has a companion daemon in the form of an animal—part of their spirit that resides outside the body; Lyra's is named Pantalaimon. Lyra uncovers a sinister plot that sends her on a journey to find her father in hopes of foiling said plot. That journey takes her to different dimensions (the fictional world is a multiverse) and ultimately to her own coming-of-age.

The trilogy is often compared to C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a comparison that makes Pullman bristle, since he famously denounced the Narnia books as thinly disguised Christian propaganda, "blatantly racist," "monumentally disparaging of women," and "one of the most ugly and poisonous things I've ever read." (Tell us how you really feel, Sir Philip.) He's more of an anti-Lewis, even though he shares the latter's appreciation for John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, from whence his trilogy gets its title. Thematically, *His Dark Materials* can be said to explore the dark, toxic underbelly of dogmatic organized religion.

A stage adaptation of the trilogy debuted in London in 2003, followed by a feature film of the first book, *The Golden Compass*, in 2007. It starred Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig as Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel, respectively, with Dakota Blue Richards in the lead role of Lyra. The visual effects won an Oscar, but critical reviews were mixed, and the film did poorly at the U.S. box office, earning just \$70 million against its \$160 million budget. The film did much better overseas with \$300 million, but New Line Cinema was still forced to restructure in 2008 as a result. The planned two sequels were permanently shelved.

- Dafne Keen plays Lyra Belacqua, who discovers that children are being kidnapped from Oxford.
YouTube/BBC
- Lyra sees something she shouldn't.
YouTube/BBC
- Ruth Wilson plays Marisa Coulter, a cold, manipulative woman conducting research on "dust" for the Church.
YouTube/BBC
- Hey, it's Lin Manuel-Miranda as balloonist Lee Scoresby, who helps Lyra early in her quest.
YouTube/BBC
- An apprehensive Lyra.
YouTube/BBC

- Clarke Peters plays the master of the fictional Jordan College at Oxford.
YouTube/BBC
- James McAvoy is Lord Asriel, Lyra's uncle, who wants to challenge the Church's Authority.
YouTube/BBC
- Danger approaches.
YouTube/BBC
- A desperate way out.
YouTube/BBC
- Could this be Svalbard?
YouTube/BBC

This latest adaptation was first announced in 2015 as a joint production between the BBC and New Line Cinema, intended for a 2017 release, but production was delayed due to the challenges of adapting the trilogy to the small screen. Writer Jack Thorne told *Radio Times* that, among other concerns, he wanted to make sure the final series was true to the books—something the trilogy's fans will no doubt appreciate.

We have almost no details about the new series, other than there should be eight episodes. And last year, we learned that Dafne Keen, who played the mutant Laura Kinney/X-23 in *Logan*, would play Lyra. Rounding out the leading roles are James McAvoy as Lord Asriel; Ruth Wilson as Marisa Coulter; Lin Manuel-Miranda as Texan balloonist Lee Scoresby; and Clarke Peters as the Master of Jordan College (US audiences likely remember him best as the wizened detective who made doll furniture as a hobby in *The Wire*).

This first teaser doesn't add much to what we already know, but it looks spectacular and does seem to capture the tone and feel of Pullman's beloved novels. What's missing is any sense of the magical elements in the series—the daemons, the portals to other worlds, and the mysterious Dust. It's definitely got us excited and hopeful about this latest adaptation, however.

We don't yet have a release date, but it will air on HBO in the U.S, and on BBC in the U.K.

Listing image by YouTube/BBC

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