

PHILIP PULLMAN

*The Book of Dust - The
Secret Commonwealth*

1.

For anyone who has ever loved Lyra, this is a hard story to read, as she endures so much more loss and suffering. What is it like to travel this painful road with Lyra? What is the point of her suffering - what role does it play in the story, and the journey as a character?

2.

The secret commonwealth itself exists in part in the form of tales told, exchanged, and circulated by the initiated. What does the novel have to say about the power of storytelling and imagination, its dangers and possibilities?

3.

Pullman has said that "A daemon is not a pet, it's part of yourself. The story that evolves in 'The Secret Commonwealth' shows the growing estrangement of Lyra from herself." What is embodied in a person's daemon - soul, spirit, imagination...? What is at the heart of Lyra's conflict with Pan?

4.

This story takes so many twists and turns, it can be hard to keep track of the different layers and subplots. How do we orient ourselves in this epic adventure? What did you think of the way the story is organised?

5.

What comes next for Lyra? What do we want for her, when we imagine an ending that does justice to her struggles and sacrifices, her incredible courage and strength, her passion and determination? The story ends on a real cliffhanger after suspense has been drawn out for many pages. Is it satisfying?