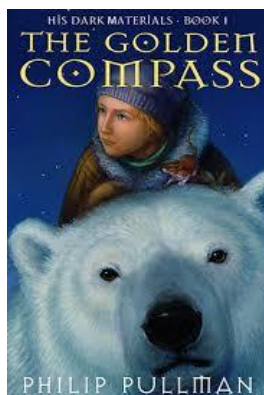


The Golden Compass



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Genre Steampunk

Synopsis Lyra Belacqua is content to run wild among the scholars of Jodan College, with her daemon familiar always by her side. But the arrival of her fearsome uncle, Lord Asriel, draws her to the heart of a terrible struggle—a struggle born of Gobblers and stolen children, witch clans and armored bears. And as she hurtles toward danger in the cold far North, Lyra never suspects the shocking truth: she alone is destined to win, or to lose, this more-than-mortal battle.

Themes Innocence, Morality and Ethics

Protagonist Female

Note Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.

More Information www.scu.edu/character



Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 1



Key Passage, p. 13

“She couldn’t help herself. She tumbled out of the wardrobe and scrambled up to snatch the glass from his hand. The wine flew out, splashing on the edge of the table and the carpet, and then the glass fell and smashed. He seized her wrist and twisted hard.

‘Lyra! What the hell are you doing?’” (p. 13).

Writing Prompt

In the paragraph above, the author describes Lyra knocking the glass of wine from Lord Asriel. Lord Asriel is dumfounded by her behavior and demands an explanation. As Lyra, **write an explanatory paragraph that informs Lord Asriel why you prevented him from drinking the wine. Explain why you were in the Retiring Room in the first place and why you felt obligated to stay.**

In a second informative paragraph, explain whether or not Lyra’s actions demonstrate *Leadership requires engagement*. Provide 2-3 reasons to support your statement.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 2



Key Passage, p. 28

“Ah, it's not our field, Charles. As I understand it, the Holy Church teaches that there are two worlds: the world of everything we can see and hear and touch, and another world, the spiritual world of heaven and hell. Barnard and Stokes were two – how shall I put it – renegade theologians who postulated the existence of numerous other worlds like this one, neither heaven nor hell, but material and sinful. They are there, close by, but invisible and unreachable. The Holy Church naturally disapproved of this abominable heresy, and Barnard and Stokes were silenced” (p. 28).

Writing Prompt

In the key passage, the Master describes the danger of believing differently than the government. Two men who put forth a theory were silenced by the governing body. Although the Master does not say how, he implies that the men were executed or imprisoned.

For centuries in our world, scientists and political thinkers have been “silenced” for proposing theories that disagreed with the prevailing school of thought. Those who fought for their beliefs often died for them.

If you were telling a story, what belief, real or imagined, would you be willing to fight for? Might it be a freedom you think people should have, a form of government, or a religious principle? **Using the Master's description of the Barnard-Stokes theory as a model, write an explanatory paragraph describing your theory or belief. Remember, this does not have to be a real-life theory; it could be something out of your imagination that is part of a story you might write. Explain why you would be willing to fight for your belief.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 3



Key Passage, p. 40

“And so the legend grew of a mysterious group of enchanterers who spirited children away. Some said their leader was a beautiful lady, others said a tall man with red eyes, while a third story told of a youth who laughed and sang to his victims so that they followed him like sheep” (p. 40).

Writing Prompt

Most modern cultures have what are known as “urban legends” - stories that many people believe are true, even though they're based on little more than rumor. In Lyra's world, children start disappearing, and everyone has a story that explains what is happening.

Do you know any urban legends that are popular in your community? If not, create one. **Write an explanatory paragraph that retells an urban legend, or tells an urban legend you've created. Since urban legends are often believable because they include local detail, be sure to include places, people, and landmarks that your peers would recognize. It can be scary, creepy, sad, or funny; the important part is that it seems like a thing that really could – or will – happen!**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 4



Key Passage, p. 28

“Ma Costa's daemon was wheeling in the bright air above her head, a hawk, fierce yellow eyes snapping this way and that, unblinking. Lyra was frightened. No one worried about a child gone missing for a few hours, certainly not a gyptian: in the tight-knit gyptian boat world, all children were precious and extravagantly loved, and a mother knew that if a child was out of sight, it wouldn't be far from someone else's who would protect it instinctively” (p. 28).

Writing Prompt

The above paragraph reveals a mother's love, but also the attitude toward children in the gyptian community. Outsiders might see them as uncaring criminals who let their kids do whatever they want, but they are a tight-knit group that look after their own very carefully. Had Billy Costa, a gyptian, not been taken, no one in Oxford may have noticed the missing children, because most of those taken were unloved and uncared for.

Write an informative paragraph describing how children are valued in your community, either real or imagined. Are they spoiled rotten? Are they raised to be seen and not heard? Are parents happy to have many kids, or do they prefer only one or two? Are the children in your world strictly controlled, or allowed to do as they please?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 70

"There was no point in asking what that meant. It lay heavily in her hands, the crystal face gleaming, the golden body exquisitely machined. It was very like a clock, or a compass, for there were hands pointing to places around the dial, but instead of the hours or the points of the compass there were several little pictures, each of them painted with extraordinary precision, as if on ivory with the finest and slenderest sable brush. She turned the dial around to look at them all. There was an anchor, an hourglass surmounted by a skull, a chameleon, a bull, a beehive... Thirty-six altogether, and she couldn't even guess what they meant" (p. 70).

Writing Prompt

Most great adventure stories include an object infused with special meaning or magical powers. Lyra's alethiometer provides the title of the novel – *The Golden Compass* – and is very like Luke's light saber, Dorothy's slippers, or Harry's Nimbus 2000.

In your adventure story, real-life or imagined, what is your significant object? **Write an explanatory paragraph that describes what the object looks like, feels like, and what it does. How does it make you, or your hero or heroine, stronger and more able to face the task ahead?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 81

“Mrs. Coulter seemed to be charged with some kind of anbaric force. She even smelled different: a hot smell, like heated metal, came off her body. Lyra had felt something of it earlier, but now she was seeing it directed at someone else, and poor Adèle Starminster had no force to resist. Her daemon fell limp on her shoulder and flapped his gorgeous wings once or twice before fainting, and the woman herself seemed to be unable to stand fully upright. Moving in a slight awkward crouch, she made her way through the press of loudly talking guests and out of the drawing room door. She had one hand clutched to her shoulder, holding the swooning daemon in place” (p. 81).

Writing Prompt

Every story has a villain. In many tales, such as *Snow White* and *101 Dalmatians*, the villain is a lovely yet evil woman. Villains take on all kinds of unique forms, and are not always who we expect.

Pretend you are journalist and write an explanatory article that describes the changes of Mrs. Coulter. Inform your reader of Lyra’s first impression of Mrs. Coulter and how her character has changed. Provide two quotes from the novel to support your article’s claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 91

"But the fox daemon tore at the cat Pantalaimon, and Lyra felt the pain in her own flesh, and sobbed a great cry as he felt. One man was swiftly lashing cords around her, around her limbs, her throat, body, head, bundling her over and over on the wet ground. She was helpless, exactly like a fly being trussed by a spider. Poor hurt Pan was dragging himself toward her, with the fox daemon worrying his back, and he had no strength left to change, even; and the other man was lying in a puddle, with an arrow through his neck -

The whole world grew still as the man tying the net saw it too.

Pantalaimon sat up and blinked, and then there was a soft thud, and the net man fell choking and gasping right across Lyra, who cried out in horror: that was *blood* gushing out of him!" (p. 91).

Writing Prompt

In today's key passage, the author describes a thrilling chase and rescue scene. Pretend you are a police officer. Write a report that explains the series of events. **In an informative paragraph, describe who is involved, what happened, and the end result. Provide as many details as possible to help prevent kidnappings in the future.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 113

“And another concern of the Master is you, child. Bernie Johansen was always clear about that. The Master of Jordan and the other Scholars, they loved you like their own child. They'd do anything to keep you safe, not just because they'd promised to Lord Asriel that they would, but for your own sake. So if the Master gave you up to Mrs. Coulter when he'd promised Lord Asriel he wouldn't, he must have thought you'd be safer with her than in Jordan College, in spite of all appearances. And when he set out to poison Lord Asriel, he must have thought that what Lord Asriel was doing would place all of them in danger, and maybe all of us, too; maybe all the world. I see the Master as a man having terrible choices to make; whatever he chooses will do harm, but maybe if he does the right thing, a little less harm will come about than if he chooses wrong. God preserve me from having to make that sort of choice” (p. 113).

Writing Prompt

In today's key passage, John Faa describes some of the terrible choices that the Master of Jordan had to make. He tried to kill Lord Asriel, a man he respects and cares about. He sent Lyra away with a woman he knew might be dangerous. He gave Lyra a valuable artifact that she doesn't know how to use, and could easily lose or misinterpret. Yet he made each of these choices because he believed they were necessary.

In an informative paragraph, describe the concept of “free will” and “fate.” Explain whether or not you believe that life is an outcome of a person's fate or destiny or if life is a result of free will and choice. Describe an experience to support your answer.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 126

“Sophonax was as sleek and healthy and beautiful as Farder Coram was ravaged and weak. He might have been ill, or he might have suffered a crippling blow, but the result was that he could not walk without leaning on two sticks, and he trembled constantly like an aspen leaf. His mind was sharp and clear and powerful, though, and soon Lyra came to love him for his knowledge and for the firm way he directed her” (p. 126).

Writing Prompt

Farder Coram has become more than a scary old man to Lyra; he is now a friend and mentor. He listens to her, guides her, and shares information with her, even when others don't think it's appropriate for her to hear. Why does he make a great mentor?

Write two explanatory paragraphs describing a mentor in your life. How is your mentor an example of leadership requires engagement? Describe the mentor's physical, emotional, and character traits. Explain the relationship between you or your character and the mentor. Give at least one example of how he or she provided guidance to the person being mentored.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 140

“Lyra being the only female on board (for John Faa had decided against taking women, after much thought), she had a cabin to herself. Not a grand cabin, to be sure; in fact, little more than a closet with a bunk and a scuttle, which was the proper name for a porthole. She stowed her few things in the drawer below the bunk and ran up excitedly to lean over the rail and watch England vanish behind, only to find that most of England had vanished in the midst before she got there” (p. 140).

Writing Prompt

Lyra has reached another turning point in her journey. Not only has she left the safe confines of Oxford, she is now leaving the country that she knows and loves. Pretend you are Lyra. Write a journal entry to describe your journey since you’ve left Oxford. **Include an informative paragraph that details why you are heading North. Ensure your journal entry includes your friends and foes of your journey.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 159

"I know the people you are seeking, the child cutters," the bear said. "They left town the day before yesterday to go north with more children. No one will tell you about them; they pretend not to see, because the child cutters bring money and business. Now, I don't like the child cutters, so I shall answer you politely. I stay here and drink spirits because the men here took my armor away, and without that, I can hunt seals but I can't go to war; and I am an armored bear; ware is the sea I swim in and the air I breathe. The men of this town gave me spirits and let me drink till I was asleep, and then they took my armor away from me. If I knew where they keep it, I would tear down the town to get it back. If you want my service, the price is this: get me back my armor. Do that, and I shall serve you in your campaign, either until I am dead or until you have a victory. The price is my armor. I want it back, and then I shall never need spirits again" (p. 159).

Writing Prompt

Some allies join the hero for ethical reasons; others have motives of their own for joining a cause. Iorek clearly falls into the latter category. Although he does not like the Gobblers, who he refers to as the "child cutters," he will not fight them without payment.

Ethically, is this the right thing to do? Do you think that this might be because he doesn't have a daemon?

Pretend you are Lyra, and explain to Iorek that he should join the fight whether or not he has his armor. **In an informative paragraph explain that *leadership ensures that the communities I am part of are better because I am in them*. Explain how Iorek should use his time and talent to promote the common good. How might Iorek be recognized for not taking payment up front?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 174-5

“Without even thinking, she darted forward and put her hand on the one vulnerable spot in the bear's armor, the gap that appeared between the helmet and the great plate over his shoulders when he bent his head, where she could see the yellow-white fur dimly between the rusty edges of metal. She dug her fingers in, and Pantalaimon instantly flew to the same spot and became a wildcat, crouched to defend her; but Iorek Byrnison was still, and the riflemen held their fire.

‘Iorek!’ she said in a fierce undertone. ‘Listen! You owe me a debt, right. Well now you can repay it. Do as I ask. Don't fight these men. Just turn around and walk away with me. We want you, Iorek, you can't stay here. Just come down to the harbor with me and don't even look back. Fader Coram and Lord Faa, let them do the talking, they'll make it all right. Leave go this man and come away with me....’ (p. 174-175).

Writing Prompt

Lyra is not a coward, nor is Iorek Byrnison. Both are experienced fighters. However, in this situation, Lyra realizes that the smart thing to do is walk away, as a fight will not solve the problem, or allow them to complete their journey.

Sometimes it is hard to fight, but harder not to. **Write an informative paragraph detailing a situation when it was best for you to walk away from a fight. What created the conflict? What would be the result of a fight? What would be the best outcome? Why did you choose to walk away? Why is that so difficult?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 106

“The little boy was huddled against the wood drying rack where hung row upon row of gutted fish, all as stiff as boards. He was clutching a piece of fish to him as Lyra was clutching Pantalaimon, with her left hand, hard, against her heart; but that was all he had, a piece of dried fish; because he had no daemon at all. The Gobblers had cut it away. That was *intercision*, and this was a severed child” (p. 106).

Writing Prompt

In today's key passage, the author describes the horror Lyra and others feel when they see their first severed child. To them, there is no more frightening image or creature they can imagine.

Pretend you are a reporter from Bolvanger. Write an article that explains Lyra's journey to the near by village. **In an informative paragraph, explain the village's thoughts on the little boy. Why did village people want Lyra to take the boy away? Describe what Lyra finds when she enters the shed. Who is the boy and what becomes of him?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 14



Key Passage, p. 201

“‘It might not have been Grumman's head,’ said Lee Scoresby. ‘Your father might have been misleading the Scholars.’

‘I suppose he might,’ said Lyra thoughtfully. ‘He was asking them for money.’

‘And when they saw the head, they gave him the money.’

‘Yeah.’

‘Good trick to play. People are shocked when they see a thing like that; they don't like to look too close.’

‘Especially Scholars,’ said Lyra” (p. 201).

Writing Prompt

Lyra learns about lorek's home in Svalbard. Pretend you are Lyra. Write a journal entry that details what you have learned about lorek. **In an informative paragraph, explain why lorek was exiled, why his armor taken away, and why his armor so important to him. Explain what lorek has done since he has been exiled. Conclude with some advice you would give lorek.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 15



Key Passage, p. 209

“She was half expecting questions about where she had come from and how she had arrived, and she was preparing answers; but it wasn't only imagination the nurse lacked, it was curiosity as well. Bolvanger might have been on the outskirts of London, and children might have been arriving all the time, for all the interest Sister Clara seemed to show. Her pert neat little daemon trotted along at her heels just as brisk and bland as she was” (p. 209).

Writing Prompt

Lyra is surprised by the lack of interest the adults at Bolvanger show in her and her background. They don't ask too many questions, and seem to accept whatever she says. Though we see Sister Clara briefly, the author paints a convincing picture of someone who is not quite “right.” Pretend you are Lyra and write a letter to the gyptians. Let them know that you are safe and unharmed. **Write an explanatory paragraph that describes where the kidnappers have taken you. Inform the gyptians of the Dust experiments taking place. Lastly, explain the character and behavior of the adults at Bolvanger. Explain how they acted so differently from the curious children she grew up with in Oxford.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 16



Key Passage, p. 229

“Now, quick,” said the goose. ‘Lyra, you must run back and mingle with the other children. Be brave, child. The gyptians are coming as fast as they can. I must help these poor daemons to find their people....’ He came closer and said quietly, ‘But they’ll never be one again. They’re sundered forever. This is the most wicked thing I have ever seen...’ (p. 229).

Writing Prompt

Outside of Bolvanger, the reaction to a severed child is universally one of horror. It is an accepted social norm that people and daemons are one unit, and can only be separated by death (if then.) **In an informative paragraph describe how a daemons is related to the soul of a human. Explain at least one similarity and at least one difference.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 17



Key Passage, p. 243

“Above the panting of the men, above her own sobs, above the high wild howl of her daemon, Lyra heard a humming sound, and saw one man (bleeding from the nose) operate a bank of switches. The other two looked up, and her eyes followed theirs. The great pale silver blade was rising slowly, catching the brilliant light. The last moment in her complete life was going to be the worst by far” (p. 243).

Writing Prompt

In terms of a Heroic Journey, in this chapter, Lyra had to Approach the Inmost Cave, and face her greatest fear of being separated from *Pan*. As they live through the final moments, many thoughts and emotions go through their minds, but they emerge truly understanding themselves better as individuals and as a team. **In an explanatory paragraph describe the sequence of events that led Lyra to be severed from *Pan*. Describe what happened first, second, and third. Include at least one quote in your paragraph.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 18



Key Passage, p. 262

“Directly above them the balloon swelled out in a huge curve. Above and ahead of them the Aurora was blazing, with more brilliance and grandeur than she had ever seen. It was all around, or nearly, and they were nearly part of it. Great swathes of incandescence trembled and parted like angels' wings, beating; cascades of luminescent glory tumbled down invisible crags to lie in swirling pools or hang like vast waterfalls” (p. 262).

Writing Prompt

In today's key paragraph, the author describes the beauty and magnificence of the Aurora. In every story, the setting is a character unto itself, and the ability to tell a great story often depends on the authors' ability to convey the importance of the setting to the reader. **In your own words, write an explanatory paragraph that describes the setting of Aurora. Use all five senses: how does this place look, smell, feel, sound, and taste? What emotion is evoked? What is the significance of Aurora?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 19



Key Passage, p. 278

“‘When bears act like people, perhaps they can be tricked,’ said Serafina Pekkala. ‘When bears act like bears, perhaps they can’t. No bear would normally drink spirits. Iorek Byrnison drank to forget the shame of exile, and it was only that which let the Trollesund people trick him’” (p. 278).

Writing Prompt

Although Lyra and Serafina are talking about bears, they are really discussing human nature. Why do human beings abuse themselves with drugs or alcohol? How does this change their ability to function in society?

Write a letter to friend or an imaginary character to explain the negative impacts of drugs or alcohol. **In an informative paragraph explain why using drugs or alcohol changes her or him in a negative way. How is your friend different now from when he or she was not using? How has the abuse affected your friend's integrity? How would changing her or his habits make her or him a better friend/?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 20



Key Passage, p. 299-300

“She promised you that she'd get the Magisterium in Geneva to agree that you could be baptized as a Christian, even though you hadn't got a daemon then. Well, I'm afraid that she hasn't done that, Iofur Raknison, and quite honestly I don't think they'd ever agree to that if you didn't have a daemon. I think she knew that, and she wasn't telling you the truth. But in any case when you've got me as your daemon, you *could* be baptized if you wanted to, because no one could argue then. You could demand it and they wouldn't be able to turn you down” (p. 299-300).

Writing Prompt

Mrs. Coulter has not kept her promise to Iofur, any more than she kept her promises to Lyra. Lyra chooses to use this situation to her advantage, offering to help Iofur meet his goals. Of course, Lyra has no more intention than her mother of helping Iofur. Describe the sequence of events that leads to the battle between Iofur and Lyra. **In an explanatory paragraph describe how Lyra set up the battle. Describe Iofur's desires. How was Lyra able to manipulate Iofur?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 21



Key Passage, p. 311

“The bears knew what they must do. Every single badge and sash and coronet was thrown off at once and trampled contemptuously underfoot, to be forgotten in a moment. They were lorek’s bears now, and true bears, not uncertain semi-humans conscious only of a torturing inferiority. They swarmed tot he palace and began to hurl great blocks of marble form the topmost towers, rocking the battlemented walls with their mighty fists until the stones came loose, and then hurling them over the cliffs to crash on the jetty hundreds of feet below” (p. 311).

Writing Prompt

lorek has won his battle, as a hero in a good story must. **In an explanatory paragraph describe the battle between lorek and lofur. Describe the ups and downs of the battle and how lorek emerges as the better bear. Provide 2-3 quotes from the novel to support your explanation.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Golden Compass, Day 22



Key Passage, p. 331

“And I'm going to that world beyond the Aurora,’ he said, ‘because I think that's where all the Dust in this universe comes from. You saw those slides I showed the Scholars in the Retiring Room. You saw Dust pouring into this world form the Aurora. You've seen that city yourself. If light can cross the barrier between the universe, if Dust can, if we can see that city, then we can build a bridge and cross. It needs a phenomenal burst of energy. But I can do it. Somewhere out there is the origin of all the Dust, all the death, the sin, the misery, the destructiveness in the world. human beings can't see anything without wanting to destroy it, Lyra. *That's* original sin. And I'm going to destroy it. Death is going to die” (p. 331).

Writing Prompt

Asriel tells Lyra about his theory of Dust. He believes it is the source of all evil, and must be destroyed. However, Lyra isn't sure if he is correct, and doesn't quite know how to respond.

Pretend you are Lyra. Write an impassioned plea to Asriel *not* to follow through in his plan to destroy Dust. **In an explanatory paragraph highlight the flaws in his theory? Explain what might happen if he is wrong? Include what you learned on your journey that might contradict his ideas? Lastly, explain what might be good about Dust?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 23



Key Passage, p. 334

"She had just realized what she'd done.

She had struggled all this way to bring something to Lord Asriel, thinking she knew what he wanted; and it wasn't the alethiometer at all. What he wanted was a child.

She had brought him Roger.

...Oh, the bitter anguish! She had thought she was *saving Roger*, and all the time she'd been diligently working to betray him..." (p. 334).

Writing Prompt

As the witches foretold, Lyra betrayed someone close to her. In this case, she didn't even realize what she was doing. Although she had the best of intentions, her actions have led straight to Roger's probable destruction. **In an explanatory paragraph, describe how the story of Lyra and Dust is related to the story of Adam and Eve. Describe does the author relate fixed daemons to the transition into adulthood. How does Lyra's thirst for knowledge related to that of Eve?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Golden Compass, Day 24



Key Passage, p. 350-351

“She turned away. Behind them lay pain and death and fear; ahead of them lay doubt, and danger, and fathomless mysteries. But they weren't alone” (p. 350-351).

Writing Prompt

Lord Asriel heads into the other world he has created with a mission to destroy Dust or original sin. **In an explanatory paragraph, describe a world without sin. How do you think the absence of sin will affect free will? Provide three ideas to support your theory.**