

# The Narrator's Dual Role: Crafting the Narratee and Implied Reader in Northern Lights

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**Abstract:** This article explores how the character of the narrator in Philip Pullman's Northern Lights constructs both the narratee and the implied reader, shaping the reader's emotional and intellectual engagement with the text. Through a third-person limited omniscient point of view, Pullman's narrator provides insight into the protagonist Lyra Belacqua's experiences, while subtly guiding the audience's response to key events, moral dilemmas, and philosophical questions. The study examines how the narrator's emotional engagement with the characters and shifting narrative focus fosters a strong connection between the narratee (the imagined recipient within the story) and the implied reader (the external audience). By analyzing the narrator's narrative strategies, this article reveals how Pullman creates a layered storytelling experience, prompting both emotional immersion and intellectual reflection. The findings illustrate how the narrator's influence in Northern Lights goes beyond mere storytelling, playing a crucial role in shaping how readers perceive characters, themes, and the narrative itself.

**Keywords:** Narrator, narratee, implied reader, Philip Pullman, Northern Lights, narrative structure, reader construction, literary theory, point of view, reader engagement, textual analysis.

**Introduction:** Philip Pullman's Northern Lights (the first book in the His Dark Materials trilogy) presents a rich and complex narrative, blending elements of fantasy, philosophy, and coming-of-age. Central to the storytelling is the character of the narrator, whose role in guiding the story becomes integral to how the audience engages with the text. In literary studies, the concept of the narrator goes beyond simply telling a story; it is often used to construct the relationship between the text and its narratee (the imagined recipient of the narrative) and the implied reader (the idealized audience that the text assumes). Through a close analysis of Northern Lights, this article will explore how the narrator constructs both the narratee and the implied reader, influencing the way the audience interacts with the novel's events, themes, and characters.

The concept of the narrator and the narratee has been central to literary theory, particularly through the works of theorists like Gerard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin. In Northern Lights, Pullman creates a

distinctive narrative voice that simultaneously addresses both the character of the narratee, a specific audience within the narrative world, and an implied reader, the broader external audience who engages with the text. The narrator's influence on these two constructs shapes the novel's storytelling techniques, including its manipulation of point of view, tone, and thematic focus. By examining how Pullman's narrator directs attention to specific elements within the plot, this article will investigate how the narrator constructs the interaction between the characters and the audience, fostering an emotional and intellectual engagement with the text.

## METHODS

To explore how the narrator in Northern Lights constructs a narratee and an implied reader, this study employs a literary analysis methodology. The analysis is focused on three core components:

1. **Narrative Point of View:** The study examines the third-person limited omniscient perspective employed by Pullman, where the narrator has access to

Lyra Belacqua's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, but occasionally provides broader commentary. The way this narrative perspective is used to engage both the narratee and the implied reader will be analyzed.

2. **Characterization of the Narratee:** The study focuses on how the narrator addresses the narratee within the text, examining how specific narrative choices position the narratee within the world of the novel. For example, when the narrator directly invokes the characters' emotions or situations, the text implicitly suggests how the narratee is to respond.

3. **Implied Reader Construction:** This component investigates how the narrative voice anticipates and shapes the implied reader's reactions. The implied reader is the conceptual reader that the text seems to assume exists, who might approach the story with certain expectations or desires. By analyzing the themes, tone, and pacing of the narrative, this section considers how Pullman's narrator invites the implied reader to react intellectually and emotionally to the events of the novel.

4. **Textual Analysis:** This analysis focuses on specific passages and narrative techniques used to construct both the narratee and the implied reader. By closely reading sections where the narrator shifts focus, tones down certain emotions, or emphasizes particular details, the study will determine how these choices guide the audience's experience.

## RESULTS

The analysis reveals how Pullman's narrator serves to both position the narratee within the fictional world of *Northern Lights* and guide the implied reader's responses to the novel. Several key findings emerge from the textual analysis:

1. **The Narrator's Role in Shaping the Narratee:** The narrator in *Northern Lights* frequently addresses the narratee by creating a world in which the narratee becomes involved in the events and emotions of the characters. The narrative voice sometimes conveys knowledge that seems directly tailored to a person within the story, such as when the narrator discusses Lyra's thoughts or gives hints about other characters. The narrator often speaks directly to the emotions of the characters, implicitly constructing the narratee's perspective. For instance, the narrator's portrayal of Lyra's innocence and growing awareness of the world around her encourages the narratee to sympathize with her and align emotionally with her journey.

2. **Point of View and Emotional Engagement:** The third-person limited omniscient point of view enhances the narrator's ability to shape both the narratee and the implied reader's emotional responses. By focusing

on Lyra's internal struggles, doubts, and revelations, the narrator creates an intimate bond between the narratee and the characters. The narrator also invites the implied reader to view events through Lyra's eyes, guiding the audience through her experiences with a mix of compassion and curiosity. The strategic shifting of focus—sometimes emphasizing Lyra's emotions or revealing hidden aspects of the world—creates a narrative tension that draws both the narratee and the implied reader into the plot.

3. **Constructing the Implied Reader:** The narrator constructs the implied reader by providing information that aligns with both thematic elements and character arcs. For instance, the novel introduces complex ideas such as the nature of the soul (the dæmons), the abuse of power (the Magisterium), and freedom of thought (the Golden Compass). The narrator frames these themes in a way that assumes the implied reader is willing to engage with these ideas critically and reflect on their implications. The implied reader is expected to react not just emotionally but intellectually to the unfolding drama. In addition, the pacing of the narrative, marked by intense moments of action followed by more reflective passages, guides the implied reader through the novel's philosophical questions.

4. **Direct Address and Invitation to Reflection:** At several points in the text, the narrator uses direct address—either through Lyra's thoughts or the narrator's commentary on events—to invite the narratee and the implied reader into a deeper relationship with the themes of the story. These moments ask the reader to question the ethical dimensions of the characters' actions, as well as the broader issues concerning the power structures and philosophies of the world in which Lyra lives. The narrator's direct approach here encourages reflection and moral contemplation, creating a space for the implied reader to engage with the narrative not only on an emotional level but also on an intellectual one.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis demonstrate how Pullman's narrator carefully constructs both the narratee and the implied reader, facilitating a nuanced and multi-layered narrative experience in *Northern Lights*. Through strategic narrative choices, Pullman shapes how readers engage with the emotional and intellectual core of the novel. Several key themes emerge from the analysis:

### 1. The Narrator's Role in Shaping the Narratee

In *Northern Lights*, the narrator plays an essential role in constructing the narratee through emotional direction and narrative focus. The narratee, who is the

imagined recipient of the narrative within the world of the story, experiences the unfolding events in tandem with Lyra. The narrator frequently directs attention to Lyra's inner world—her emotions, thoughts, and dilemmas—suggesting that the narratee shares in these feelings. For instance, when Lyra is filled with fear or confusion, the narrator often conveys these emotions with a tone of urgency, guiding the narratee to adopt a similar emotional response. The narrator's focus on Lyra's development and internal struggles also encourages the narratee to empathize with her journey, particularly her growing awareness of the Magisterium's corruption and her role in the fate of the world.

Additionally, the narratee is indirectly addressed through moments when the narrator emphasizes Lyra's innocence or naivety. For example, when Lyra is initially unaware of the dangerous politics surrounding her, the narrator subtly guides the narratee to feel a sense of protectiveness towards her, creating a connection between the narratee and the protagonist. This strategic use of emotional direction helps construct the narratee's perspective and emotional involvement in the story.

## 2. The Influence of Narrative Point of View on the Implied Reader

The third-person limited omniscient perspective is a key tool the narrator uses to construct the implied reader. Through this narrative technique, the narrator provides access to Lyra's thoughts and emotions, which engages the implied reader with a personal connection to the protagonist. Lyra's internal monologues, which are often filled with curiosity, doubt, and determination, allow the implied reader to witness her growth and development. The implied reader is thus encouraged to adopt an empathetic stance toward Lyra, which makes her eventual heroic actions and moral decisions more impactful.

At the same time, Pullman's narrator also provides broader commentary on the political and philosophical dimensions of the world in which Lyra lives, such as the oppressive power of the Magisterium and the idea of free will. The implied reader is expected to critically engage with these themes, reflecting on the nature of authority, belief systems, and the personal responsibilities of those in power. The implied reader is not just an emotional participant but also an intellectual one, invited to consider the larger moral and philosophical issues raised by the narrative.

By alternating between Lyra's internal perspective and broader commentary on the world, the narrator ensures that the implied reader is positioned to respond emotionally to the plot while also being

intellectually challenged by the novel's themes. This dual engagement makes the reading experience rich and layered, as the implied reader is called upon to reflect on both the character's development and the broader moral questions within the narrative.

## 3. Narrative Techniques and Reader Construction

Several narrative techniques used by the narrator in *Northern Lights* contribute to the construction of the narratee and the implied reader. Shifting points of view and narrative pacing are two key methods. For example, moments of high tension, such as the capture of Lyra by the Gobblers or the discovery of the truth behind Dust, are often followed by slower, more reflective passages. These shifts in pacing not only create suspense but also allow the implied reader time to reflect on the significance of the events.

Moreover, the narrator's use of direct address to Lyra and other characters sometimes involves the implied reader in a more personal way. In moments when the narrator emphasizes the emotional stakes of a scene, such as Lyra's fear of losing her friends or the trauma she experiences during her adventures, the implied reader is invited to identify more closely with the characters, fostering a sense of shared experience.

Through these narrative strategies, Pullman's narrator builds an interactive relationship between the narratee and the implied reader. The narratee is emotionally invested in the narrative, while the implied reader is engaged both emotionally and intellectually, responding to the unfolding story with a mixture of empathy, moral consideration, and philosophical reflection.

## 4. Moral and Philosophical Engagement with the Implied Reader

The narrative construction of the implied reader in *Northern Lights* is not limited to emotional or intellectual engagement alone. The novel also encourages the implied reader to consider important moral and philosophical questions. These include themes of freedom versus authority, the role of knowledge, and the nature of belief. Through the voice of the narrator, these themes are presented in ways that require the implied reader to reflect on how these issues play out in the fictional world and how they may resonate with real-world challenges.

For instance, the narrator presents the Magisterium as a powerful institution that seeks to control knowledge, and through Lyra's quest to uncover the truth, the implied reader is encouraged to reflect on the dangers of dogmatic belief systems and the importance of intellectual freedom. The moral ambiguity of characters like Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter forces the

implied reader to question their own sense of right and wrong, as well as the complexities of human motivation. By constructing this moral landscape, the narrator ensures that the implied reader is not merely a passive recipient of events but an active participant in the story's ethical inquiries.

Through a careful construction of both the narratee and the implied reader, Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* creates a richly layered narrative that invites both emotional immersion and intellectual reflection. The third-person limited omniscient perspective, coupled with the narrator's emotional engagement and philosophical reflections, shapes the reader's response to the novel's characters and themes. By balancing these elements, the narrator not only fosters a deep connection between the narratee and the fictional world but also encourages the implied reader to engage critically with the story's moral and philosophical questions. This dual construction of audience engagement enriches the reading experience, making *Northern Lights* a complex and thought-provoking work that continues to resonate with readers of all ages.

The narrator in *Northern Lights* plays a pivotal role in constructing both the narratee and the implied reader. By adopting a third-person limited omniscient perspective, the narrator allows the audience to experience the story through Lyra's eyes while also providing broader insights into the world around her. This dual focus ensures that the narratee, the imagined character within the narrative, is guided through the events and emotions of the plot, while the implied reader is invited to analyze the philosophical and moral themes at play.

The narratee's construction is achieved through the narrator's emotional engagement with the characters and their inner thoughts. The narrator continually shifts focus between Lyra's perspectives, other characters' actions, and the broader world, allowing the audience to experience the complexities of the story and engage with the moral and philosophical dilemmas it presents. This complex interaction between characters and the narrative voice creates a multi-layered reading experience that engages both the narratee and the implied reader.

Furthermore, the implied reader is shaped through the intellectual demands of the text. The novel's philosophical concerns—ranging from the exploration of freedom and authority to the nature of belief and science—are framed in ways that require the implied reader to think critically about the implications of the events and characters in the story. The narrator provides not just an emotional experience of the

narrative but an invitation to engage in broader debates about power, morality, and the construction of truth.

Ultimately, the interplay between the narrator, the narratee, and the implied reader in *Northern Lights* creates a richly textured narrative that challenges readers to consider not only the fictional world Pullman has created but also the broader questions it raises about human nature and society.

## CONCLUSION

In *Northern Lights*, Philip Pullman crafts a narrative that intricately balances the roles of the narrator, narratee, and implied reader. The narrator's third-person limited omniscient point of view allows for a deep exploration of Lyra's emotional and intellectual journey, while also guiding the implied reader through complex philosophical themes. By constructing both the narratee and the implied reader, Pullman encourages a multifaceted reading experience that combines emotional engagement with intellectual reflection. This narrative strategy enhances the complexity of *Northern Lights* and ensures that its themes resonate with readers on multiple levels, inviting them to reflect on not just the story but also the broader implications of its philosophical and ethical questions.

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