About Philip Pullman

I was born in Norwich in 1946, and educated in England, Zimbabwe, and Australia, before my family settled in North Wales. I received my secondary education at the excellent Ysgol Ardudwy, Harlech, and then went to Exeter College, Oxford, to read English, though I never learned to read it very well.

I found my way into the teaching profession at the age of 25, and taught at various Oxford Middle Schools before moving to Westminster College in 1986, where I spent eight years involved in teaching students on the B.Ed. course.

I've published nearly twenty books, mostly of the sort that are read by children, though I'm happy to say that the natural audience for my work seems to be a mixed one - mixed in age, that is, though the more mixed in every other way as well, the better.

My first children's book was Count Karlstein (1982, republished in 2002). That was followed by The Ruby in the Smoke (1986), the first in a quartet of books featuring the young Victorian adventurer, Sally Lockhart. I did a great deal of research for the background of these stories, and I don’t intend to let it lie unused, so there will almost certainly be more of them.

I've also written a number of shorter stories which, for want of a better term, I call fairy tales. They include The Firework-Maker's Daughter, I Was a Rat!, and Clockwork, or All Wound Up. This is a kind of story I find very enjoyable, though immensely difficult to write.

However, my most well-known work is the trilogy His Dark Materials, beginning with Northern Lights (The Golden Compass in the USA) in 1995, continuing with The Subtle Knife in 1997, and concluding with The Amber Spyglass in 2000. These books have been honoured by several prizes, including the Carnegie Medal, the Guardian Children's Book Award, and (for The Amber Spyglass) the Whitbread Book of the Year Award the first time in the history of that prize that it was given to a children's book.

I was the 2002 recipient of the Eleanor Farjeon Award for children's literature. At the award ceremony for that prize, which I was very proud to receive, I promised to spend my time in future making fewer speeches and writing more books.

Well, that was an easy promise to make, and an easy one to break as well. The trouble is that people keep asking me to stand up and speak about one thing or another, and I keep finding things to be interested in and talk about. I suppose I shall have to put up with it, and so will my audiences.

I have been very lucky with prizes. Northern Lights won the Carnegie Medal in 1996, and ten years later it was awarded the Carnegie of Carnegies, chosen by readers from all the books that have won this medal in the 70 years since it was first awarded. In 2001 The Amber Spyglass became the first children's book to win the overall Whitbread Award (now known as the Costa Award). The Whitbread could, and should, have gone to a children's book long before, but someone had to be first, and I was the lucky one.

In 2005 I was surprised and delighted to win the Astrid Lindgren Award, or rather to share it with the Japanese illustrator Ryoji Arai. This is a wonderful international honour given by the Swedish government to writers, or illustrators, or others connected with bringing books to children. It?s very generous of Sweden to do that, but Astrid Lindgren was a great woman, and they are proud of what she achieved and glad to commemorate her with the award given in her name.