The Golden Compass is the first in Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy. Lyra Belacqua, an unruly child, finds herself at Jordon College, where she is free to roam as she pleases unaware that she is a key player in an ancient prophecy. Here she is visited by Lord Asriel who she believes to be her uncle. He has returned to get support for his return to the North to study Dust. He considers this mysterious phenomenon a threat from an alternate universe. After Lord Asriel returns to the artic wastelands, Lyra’s best friend, Roger, is kidnapped. Lyra takes advantage of an offer made by the powerful Mrs. Coulter to become her apprentice and uses this opportunity as a chance to search for Roger. (The reader knows that Mrs. Coulter is not a nice person because in Lyra’s world, every human has a daemon, an animal counterpart that is an extension of that person’s soul and Mrs. Coulter’s is a nasty golden monkey.) Before Lyra leaves, the Master of Jordon College gives her an alethiometer, a rare and magical device used to discover the truth. After escaping Mrs. Coulter, Lyra locates Roger who is being held captive in a research facility. They are rescued by the Lee Scoresby and Iorek Byrnison, an armored bear and escape in a hot air balloon. Many adventures follow including the reinstatement of Iorek Byrnison’s reign as bear-king, the cruel death of Roger, and Lord Asriel’s entry into another world.

Note: Students need to have read The Golden Compass to successfully complete these lessons.

The Alethiometer: A Truth-telling Tool

Fantasy writers create strange new worlds inhabited by unique characters whose language, laws, and tools can be whatever their imagination allows. Pullman creates a tool for Lyra: the alethiometer. This unique instrument, once she learns how to use it, gives her power and insight.

Suggested Grade Level: 4–7
Time Required: 30–35 minutes

Objectives:
• The student will review the format of dictionary entry words.
• The student will use a list of word parts to create and define an invented word.

Materials:
• The Dictionary: A Reference Tool visual
• Create and Define a Terrific Tool activity sheet
• index cards
• writing tools
• dictionaries for student reference

Procedure:
1. Prepare materials prior to class.
2. Introduce the lesson by defining a dictionary as “a book of alphabetically arranged words of a language.” Inform the students that they will be inventing words and creating dictionary entries for these words.
3. Ask the students: What do you use a dictionary for? (Spelling and word meaning will be the most common answers.) What other information can you find in a dictionary? (Parts of speech, pronunciation, word history, etc.)
4. Display The Dictionary: A Reference Tool visual. Review the information on the visual with the class.
5. Give each student (or group) a copy of the Create and Define a Terrific Tool activity
Library Lessons

sheet, index cards, and writing tools. Supply dictionaries for students to look up meanings of word parts.
6. Read over the directions on the activity sheet with the class.
7. Ask the students if someone can volunteer an invented word by combining a few of the word parts in the list. Give “ultragauge,” the best gauge ever, as an example.
8. Encourage Students to share the definitions of invented words with the class.

Extension Activities:
The students’ invented words on the index cards can be used to:
• Arrange words in alphabetical order.
• Create an Invented Terrific Tool Dictionary.
• Study root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

McREL Standards
Language Arts
• Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Lesson 2: Make it Fantasy

Philip Pullman’s The Golden Compass meets all the requirements of a fantasy. It takes place in a rich imaginary world ruled by magic that includes witches and armored bears in its population. The main character, eleven-year-old Lyra Belacqua, like all the humans in her world, has a daemon, a visible animal counterpart that represents her soul. This “quest” tale has Lyra searching for her friend Roger, and in doing so, finds her indirectly seeking knowledge and wisdom.

Suggested Grade Level: 4–7
Time Required: 30–40 minutes

Objectives:
• The student will be introduced to the characteristics of fantasy literature.
• The student will review the story elements of plot, setting (place), and character (people).
• The student will use selected information to create a problem for a fantasy story.

Materials:
• What Does Genre Mean? visual
• Sets of Plot, Places, and People Cards (best if run off on differ colored card stock)

• Make it Fantasy activity sheet
• writing tools

Procedure:
1. Prepare materials prior to class. Note: Card sets will be easier to keep organized if each is run off on a different color.
2. Introduce the lesson by asking the students if they know what fantasy literature is and if they can give examples of some fantasy titles. Accept all reasonable answers.
3. Display the What Does Genre Mean? visual. Read and review this information with the students.
4. Show the students a sample of the Plot, Places, and People card sets. Demonstrate the activity by having a student choose a card from each set and read the information on it to the class. Brainstorm with the students what a possible problem could be for this selection. Example: Plot Card While trying to correct a simple mistake, a character keeps creating more and more magical mischief People Card A kindergarten teacher and a magical puppet Place Card In an old abandoned fortress The Problem Could Be While on a field trip the magical puppet keeps giving the teacher and her students bad directions, and they get lost in the fortress. They discover the treasure of a sleeping dragon and want to take it back to school with them. The students trick the magical puppet into waking up the dragon and leading him deep into the fortresses dungeons. Each student takes an armful of treasure and they find their way back to the bus and return to school. The puppet and the dragon are never seen again. (The generous students donate the treasure to the school so that a wonderful new library, computer lab and soccer field can be built.)
5. Distribute card sets and activity sheets. Students may work independently or in small groups.
6. Review directions on the activity sheet. Tell students how much time they have to complete the assignment. (This activity is an example of one that will be completed in the amount of time allocated.)
7. Encourage students to share their selections and solutions with the class.

Extension Activities:
The Plot, Places, and People Card Sets can also be used to:
• Design a book jacket illustrating the information on all three cards.
• Create a humorous title and author for the
Lesson 3:
Fantastic Fictional Bears

One of the characteristics of fantasy literature is the inclusion of out-of-this-world characters. Iorek Byrnison, the rightful ruler of the armored bears is an excellent example of such a character.

Suggested Grade Level: 3–6
Time Required: 20–25 minutes

Objectives:
• The student will review and investigate fictional works featuring anthropomorphism, the literary device where animals are given human-like characteristics such as talking and reasoning.
• The student, using pre knowledge and research skills, will complete an activity sheet matching book characters, titles, and authors.

Materials:
• Fantastic Fictional Bears activity sheet
• Writing tools
• Optional: Available book titles listed on activity sheet for students to checkout after completing the lesson

Procedure:
1. Prepare activity sheets prior to class. Collect available titles of the books to use for students to examine and possibly checkout following the lesson.
2. Introduce the lesson by explaining that writers of fantasy sometimes give human characteristics to animals and inanimate objects and that this is called “anthropomorphism.” Ask students to give examples of titles that include anthropomorphism. Common responses include: 
   - *Bunnicula* by James Howe
   - *Hank the Cowdog* by John R. Erickson
   - *Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter
   - *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by Frank L. Baum
3. Distribute activity sheets.
4. Read the directions to the students and review the example.
5. Students may work independently or in small groups. (This activity sheet also works well as a visual that is presented by the teacher as a class activity.)
6. Encourage students to fill in the answers they are sure of and to explore the library shelves and patrons catalog to find the information needed to complete the rest of the activity sheet.
7. Check as a group for understanding.

Answers:
2. Brer Bear: *Tales of Uncle Remus*, Joel Chandler Harris
3. Corduroy: *Corduroy*, Don Freeman
4. Father, Mother, and Baby Bear: *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, Brothers Grimm
5. Irving and Muktuk: *Bad Bears in the Big City: An Irving & Muktuk Story*, Daniel Pinkwater
6. Little Bear: *Little Bear’s Visit*, Else Holmelund Minarik and Maurice Sendak
7. Mr. and Mrs. Bear: *The Valentine Bears*, Eve Bunting
8. Paddington Bear: *A Bear Called Paddington*, Michael Bond
10. Winnie the Pooh: *The House at Pooh Corner*, A. A. Milne

McREL Standards
Reading
• Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Lynne Farrell Stover has over thirty years of experience as an educator and is currently a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She has taught many teacher workshops and won Teacher of the Year in 1999 from the Virginia Council of Economic Education and from the Virginia Association for the Gifted. She is the author of *Magical Library Lessons*, *More Magical Library Lessons*, *Magical Library Lessons: Holiday Happenings*, and *From Snicket to Shakespeare* from UpstartBooks.
In *The Golden Compass* by Philip Pullman, Lyra Belacqua is given a rare magical device by the Master of Jordan College. He tells her little about it, other than it is called an alethiometer and there are only six of them in existence. Lyra is on her own to discover what its uses are and how it can help her.

Even though Jordon College is an imaginary place, it is probable that there are dictionaries in its library. A dictionary is a reference tool where one can find words listed in alphabetical order and includes such information as correct spelling, definitions, pronunciation, word history (etymology), parts of speech, and illustrations.

If Lyra had looked up “alethiometer” in the dictionary, she may have found this entry:

```
main entry | syllable division | part of speech | definitions
----------|------------------|---------------|----------------
alethiometer: [a leth’ i o me ter] n. 1. A rare tool used to measure the truth 2. A compass-like device that, under certain circumstances, can reveal the past, relate the present, and predict the future [Greek- alethia, truth, meter, measure] < SEE PICTURE>
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*LibrarySparks* • January 2008 Web Resources
Create and Define a Terrific Tool

Tools are devices we use to help us solve problems. A ruler helps us measure length, a knife helps us cut things, and a dictionary helps us research words.

Philip Pullman, the author of The Golden Compass, created a special tool for his main character, Lyra. He named it an “alethiometer”—a device to be used to reveal the truth.

Pretend that you are writing a fantasy book and wish to create a terrific tool to help your hero. What will you call it? What special things can it do? Using two or more word parts in any order, create a new word for a special tool. Write a dictionary entry for this new tool. Use a dictionary to help find the meanings of the word parts.

Word Part List

<table>
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<tr>
<th>audio</th>
<th>centric</th>
<th>scribe</th>
<th>geo</th>
<th>hyper</th>
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<td>needle</td>
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<td>wedge</td>
<td>quest</td>
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<td>key</td>
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<td>focal</td>
<td>beam</td>
<td>zoom</td>
<td>graph</td>
<td>cam</td>
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</table>

Example:

alethiometer: [a leth’ i o me ter] n. 1. A rare tool used to measure the truth 2. A compass-like device that, under certain circumstances, can reveal the past, relate the present, and predict the future [Greek- alethia, truth, meter, measure]

< SEE PICTURE>
Most books fit into a specific literary “genre,” or story type defined by its subject matter. Categories of literary genres include mystery, adventure, sports story, and historical fiction. Philip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass* is a good example of the fantasy genre.

**What Makes a Book a Fantasy?**

**PLOT** The events of the story are frequently fantastic, could never have happened logically, and are explained by the existence of magic.

**PLACE** The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time, usually in the past.

**PEOPLE** The characters include members of the magical world such as witches, unicorns, elves, and giants.

**PROBLEM** The problems in the story are solved in an “enchanting” matter by using magic.
**Plot Cards**

**Fantasy Plot** The events of the story are frequently fantastic, could never have happened logically, and are explained by the existence of magic.

**A Quest Tale** The search for a magic lamp that will give the owner three wishes.

**Surviving a Disaster** A terrible storm has stranded a small group of time travelers.

**To The Rescue** The main character has a limited time to save a friend from being trapped.

**Mistaken Identity** A character is not what others think and the truth must be revealed.

**A Silly Story** While trying to correct a simple mistake, a character keeps creating more and more magical mischief.

**Overcoming Adversity** The least likely character must use a magic spell to save the day.
Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

In an old abandoned fortress

Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

On the other side of a magical mirror

Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

Under a haunted bridge

Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

In a house made of fruitcake and candy canes

Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

Behind a large, musical waterfall

Fantasy Place The setting of the story often takes place in an imaginary, Earth-like place during an unspecified time—usually in the past.

Near a forest full of magnificent, talking trees
**People Cards**

**Fantasy People** The characters include members of the magical world such as witches, unicorns, elves, and giants

(Main Character & Sidekick)

A twelve-year-old girl and her pet monkey (They both have purple hair.)

Twins who are capable seeing things through each others’ eyes

(Main Character & Sidekick)

The captain of pirate ship and his very intelligent parrot

A really big boy and an extremely small dragon

(Main Character & Sidekick)

A kindergarten teacher and a magical puppet

Characters named “Big Green Walking Shoes” and “The Little Good Fowl”

(Main Character & Sidekick)
Make it Fantasy

Directions: Randomly select a card from each of the three sets; Plot, Places, and People. Record the information on each card on this activity sheet. Create a “fantastic” problem that needs to be solved by these characters at this setting.

What is the PLOT?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Where is the PLACE?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Who are the PEOPLE?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What is the PROBLEM and how is it solved?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Extra Credit

Who are some other characters in this fantasy tale?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Directions: Using the provided lists, complete the chart by matching the bear with the book and author.

**Books**
- *A Bear Called Paddington*
- *Corduroy*
- *The House at Pooh Corner*
- *Little Bear’s Visit*
- *Bad Bears in the Big City: An Irving & Muktuk Story*
- *The Jungle Book*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *Tales of Uncle Remus*
- *The Big Honey Hunt*
- *Tales of Uncle Remus*

**Authors**
- A. A. Milne
- Daniel Pinkwater
- Joel Chandler Harris
- Don Freeman
- Michael Bond
- Eve Bunting
- Stan and Jan Berenstain
- The Brothers Grimm
- Else Holmelund Minarik & Maurice Sendak
- Rudyard Kipling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bear</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Iorek Byrnison</td>
<td>The Golden Compass</td>
<td>Philip Pullman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Baloo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Brer Bear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Corduroy</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Father, Mother, and Baby Bear</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Irving and Muktuk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Little Bear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Mr. and Mrs. Bear</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Paddington Bear</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Papa, Mama, Brother Bear, and Sister Bear</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Winnie-the-Pooh</td>
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