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# The Book of Dust #1: La Belle Sauvage

Emma Patton

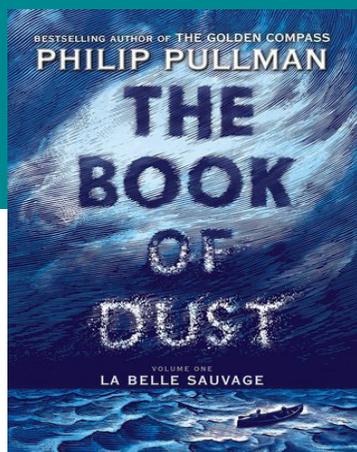
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## Book Review

# The Book of Dust #1: La Belle Sauvage

### Author

Philip Pullman

### Illustrator

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### Reviewer

Emma Patton

### Rating

Significant Shortcomings

### Level

Young Adult

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### Pages

464

### Year

2017

### Publisher

Knopf Books for Young Readers

### ISBN

9780375815300

Malcolm Polstead doesn't have much chance for adventure. His parents run an inn, and he keeps himself entertained by listening to the customers and watching them interact. He visits the nuns at the nearby priory, rides in his boat called La Belle Sauvage, and, of course, is very close with his daemon—a part of Malcolm's own consciousness that exists in animal form and goes with him everywhere. But there is unrest brewing in Malcolm's town, and he quickly finds himself involved. It all begins when a baby, Lyra, is brought to the priory to be sheltered and protected by the nuns. Strange people start coming to the inn to ask questions about the baby, and Malcolm tries to figure out why. Meanwhile, the church, which rules the society, tightens its grip on all the citizens. With tensions running high and confusing stories flying around, Malcolm aims to discover the truth and do anything he can to protect baby Lyra.

La Belle Sauvage is a prequel to Philip Pullman's highly-acclaimed His Dark Materials series, which starts with The Golden Compass. Though this book does the world-building work with the assumption that the reader has not read the other series, it would probably be more enjoyable for readers of his other books, as they can find backstories for familiar characters and more context for the story they already love. One thing that is unclear is which ages this book is intended for. Though it begins with a simplistic narrative structure and initially seems directed toward middle grade readers, the book gradually becomes darker, with quite a bit of content that would not be appropriate for readers that young. However, even with some profanity and sexual content, the main characters are still children, so it wouldn't quite find its ideal audience with adults. For that reason, though the book is well written, there are few readers that it would be ideal for.

\*Contains severe language, mild sexual content, and mild violence.