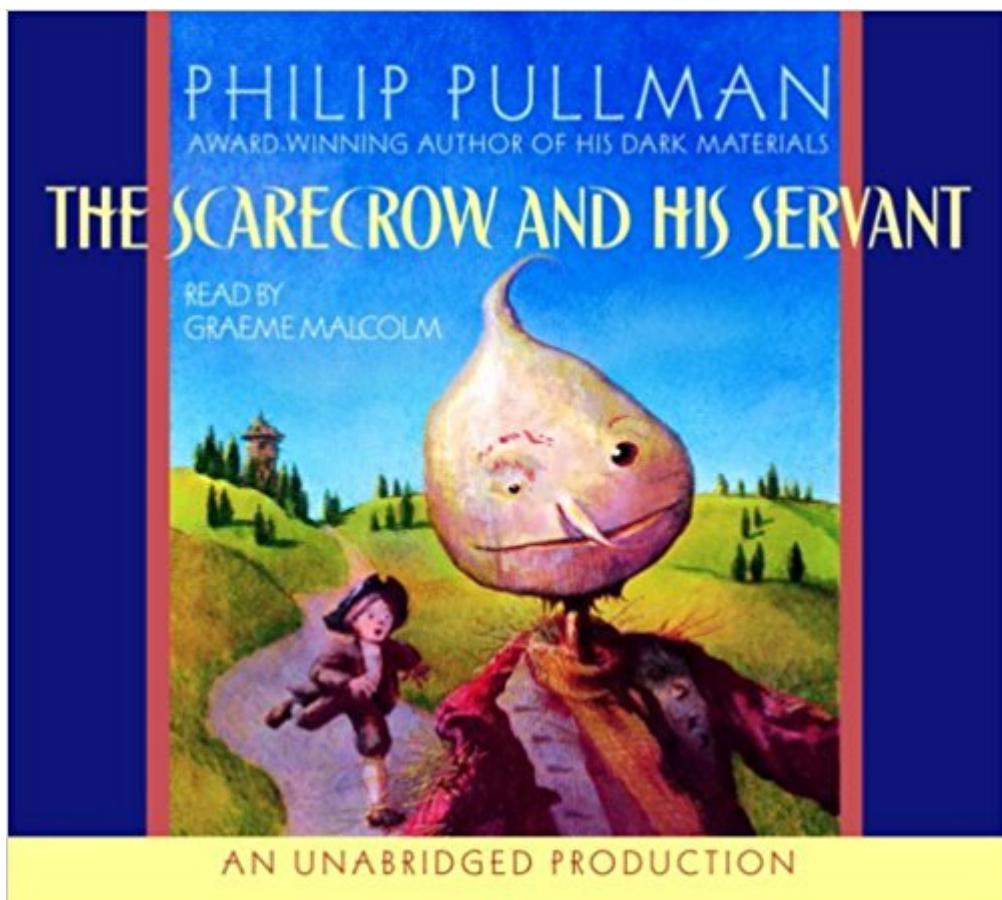


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# The Scarecrow And His Servant



## Synopsis

A tattered scarecrow stands in the middle of a muddy field, taking no notice of the violent thunderstorm around him. But when a bolt of lightning strikes him, fizzing its way through his turnip head and down his broomstick, the Scarecrow blinks with surprise—*and* comes to life. So begins the story of the Scarecrow, a courteous but pea-brained fellow with grand ideas. He meets a boy, Jack, who becomes his faithful servant. Leaving behind his bird-scaring duties, the Scarecrow sets out for Spring Valley, with Jack at his side. As the valiant Scarecrow plunges them into terrifying dangers—*battles, brigands, broken hearts, and treasure islands*—he never realizes he’s being followed by the one family who desperately wishes he’d never sprung to life. Will the Scarecrow discover the secret to his past before the crooked Buffalonis close in on him?

## Book Information

Audio CD

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Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #4,877,859 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > ( P ) > Pullman, Philip #1645 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > Fantasy #2363 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > General

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 4-6—*Old Mr. Pandolfo, feeling that life is getting too difficult—what with troublesome weather, troublesome soldiers, and very troublesome cousins—decides the time has come to create a scarecrow. At least a scarecrow would take care of the birds. Mr. Pandolfo creates a fine scarecrow, indeed, with a large turnip for a head, a broomstick for a backbone, dressed in a tweed suit stuffed with straw. Hidden within it, carefully wrapped in oilskin, is a mysterious letter. But how can this extraordinary creature—who*

comes to life when struck by a bolt of lightning. Will he fulfill his destiny if he's stuck out in the middle of a field? Enter Jack, an enterprising, intelligent, and practical young orphan fleeing the soldiers who robbed him of home and family. Jack's motto, It could be worse, comes in handy as he agrees to become the servant of the rather egocentric scarecrow, setting off to find excitement and glory. Scarecrow's excellent opinion of himself sets the stage for a variety of silly, yet dangerous, adventures. Run-ins with government officials, soldiers, and unscrupulous business people provide plenty of opportunities for moralizing on the evils of society. In another setting, this story line might seem over-the-top, but Pullman's clever employment of fairy-tale conventions, his superb use of language, and his engaging dialogue make it a wholly satisfying yarn of ridiculous proportions, and Bailey's line drawings provide just the right feeling of long ago that every good fairy tale deserves.

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**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 4-6. Pullman seems equally at home whether creating high fantasy, Victorian mysteries, or old-fashioned stories in the fairy-tale fashion. Here he excels in the latter mode, creating unique characters to charm young readers. When Scarecrow (reminiscent of his relative in the Wizard of Oz) meets orphan Jack, both the boy and straw man see the wisdom of Jack's attending to the scarecrow as a servant. Together the pair contends with "danger . . . followed by glory . . . leading to sorrow" as promised by a fortune-teller. It's Jack who keeps Scarecrow's head on (literally at times) as his master blithely takes a turn on the boards, becomes an officer in the army, and finds treasure on an island, even as he keeps his inner conviction rolled up on a scroll stuffed in his shirt. The umbrella story about Scarecrow's *raison d'être* (to rescue his polluted valley from an evil ruling family) is purposive, but its sharp point is cushioned by the flimflam and fancy pervading the tale. Best of all, however, is the charm exuded by Scarecrow and the boy, two memorable fellows who may seem familiar, but are utterly their own. Ilene Cooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

An entertaining adventure for all ages. Captivating, hard to put down. There were many funny sequences of events. A great quick read.

I thought this was a nice little story. I'm 27 years old but I'm a big Pullman fan so I read this despite the fact that it is probably intended for a younger audience. Like I said, cute and simple. Nothing

complex or tremendously moving.

This book is hysterical, poignant, learned, and not being read by kids anywhere. The publisher should be ashamed for not marketing "Scarecrow" well : my local Borders had it in " teen science fiction"! My 10 year old and I had an uproarious time with this book - Pullman is a clever, sharp and taut writer . For those who enjoyed "The Pirates! In an Adventure With Scientists " (another poorly sold book), or maybe the funniest parts of "Hoot",this book is for you - and tell your friends ! Teachers of grades 4-7 need to get on the ball - it isn't just Harry Potter, Captain Underpants, or Kate DeCamilla (at least she 's popular) out there !

I read this to my daughter and we both found it highly amusing. Fast paced story with lots of adventure and laughs.

Good enough tale for young'ens with morals aplenty. Just not at the level of the "Dark Materials" novels which entertain not only young people, but provoke thought in adults as well in a superb way.

In the tradition of "The Wizard of Oz," Philip Pullman's children's novel, "The Scarecrow and His Servant" blends fantasy with adventure to create a curious story of friendship and ingenuity. When struck by lightning in a wheat field, a typical scarecrow with a broomstick backbone and a turnip head comes to life like Frankenstein--with the notable exception of the scarecrow's decidedly benign and non-monstrous nature. The Scarecrow soon happens upon a young boy, Jack, whom he adopts as his servant, and the two embark upon an adventurous journey to Spring Valley, where the Scarecrow is sure that he belongs. They encounter dangerous events at every turn, from brigands to a regiment to a shipwreck, and their quest is challenging. Fortunately for the humorous and often ignorant Scarecrow, Jack is inventive and resourceful, and together they face each trial with hope. However, as with every folk story, there is a villain determined to have his own way, and this time that entity is embodied by the Buffalonis, an ill-famed family who claims the rights to Spring Valley. The outcome may be unexpected, but the fun and danger of the journey is certain."The Scarecrow and His Servant" is written much like a fairy tale for older children and adolescents aged approximately 8-12. There are many words that will require a dictionary or an adult's guidance, and the obscenity "damn" appears on page 116. The story itself is highly fantastical and unbelievable, containing multiple anachronisms such as mentions of winning the lottery and a police station, but hence the mythical element. Overall, Pullman's short novel introduces readers to endearing

characters and an interesting plotline fraught with obstacles and humor, if inaccurate and insensible at times.

This strange little book is a cross between The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and the Wizard of Oz. A dying farmer makes a scarecrow and tucks a letter inside "to show where he belonged." The Scarecrow is struck by lightning and comes to life. He meets a small boy who has lost his family and home to marauding soldiers, and the boy, Jack, becomes the Scarecrow's servant. The two wander about the countryside having adventures. The Scarecrow is all wide-eyed innocence, while Jack is loyal and smart. At one point they meet up with a regiment of soldiers, and the Scarecrow is made a Captain because he's "nowhere near clever enough" to be a private or a sergeant. The battle scene reminded me of the feud in Huckleberry Finn. Birds play a big part in the story, which also involves a fight against an evil company out to destroy the land for profit. The illustrations by Peter Bailey are wonderful. The Scarecrow begins life with a turnip head and ends the story with a coconut head. The humor is wry and sometimes a little twisted. The target audience is age 8-12, and I think this would make a good book to read out loud or with a child.

This is a very entertaining Middle Grade read. I really enjoyed Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" series and "Sally Lockhart" books, so I do like his writing style and his inventive storytelling. The Scarecrow and His Servant is a mix of a fairy tale and an homage to Don Quixote with a sinister streak in the unknown motivations of the powerful Buffaloni family. Although the adventures the Scarecrow takes Jack on are rather sedate and sometimes just silly, Jack and the Scarecrow's schemes are very entertaining and unexpected. The characterizations of the main characters are pretty broad and easy, and while the action in the story moves along at a comfortable pace, it does come together nicely in the climax scenes in the courtroom. And in the final scenes I saw that philosophical edge that Philip Pullman likes to add to his novels and which I always find very interesting. In this case it was the nature of identity. Although the story seems to focus on the Scarecrow, I found his simple minded sincerity a little tiring after awhile, and thought that earnest and sensible Jack was a great counterpoint, and much more sympathetic. The other standout character was crusty Granny Raven who has some great scenes near the end of the story. This book is a witty, light, easy read - perfect for children or adults who love whimsical reads.

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