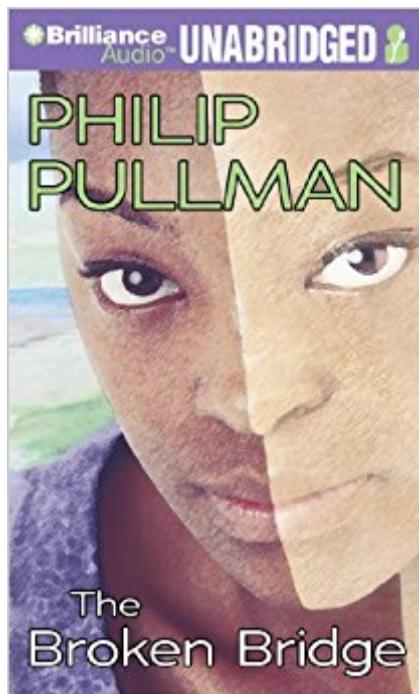


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# The Broken Bridge



## **Synopsis**

Although she has been raised by her father, sixteen-year-old Ginny has always felt a bond with her mother, a Haitian painter whom she has never known. Like her mother, Ginny is a talented and passionate artist. As the only mixed-race teen in a small Welsh village, Ginny hasn't always had an easy life, but her love for art has always helped her get along. Then her world is turned upside down. First she learns that she has a white half brother, the child of her father's first marriage. Then she uncovers some startling news about her mother. Suddenly, her whole life seems like a lie. Desperate and confused, Ginny sets off on an urgent quest to find the truth about her past - and lay claim to her true identity.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

PW commented that the author "deftly interweaves strong themes" in this "moving" tale of a half-black teenager growing up in rural north Wales. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

Grade 8-12-- Ginny, 16, has always felt somewhat an outsider in her Welsh village. Her Haitian mother is dead, but Ginny has always derived security in her relationship with her English father, and in the creative talent inherited from her artist mother. Then she discovers she has a white half-brother who is about to join the family; suddenly half-remembered scenes from her childhood begin to take on meaning. Step by step Ginny begins to peel back the mystery of her life, drawing

on hitherto untapped resources of courage and resilience to raise the questions that need to be asked, and then to search out the answers, however painful that process may be. Her past and present are filled with ``broken bridges'' needing repair or rebuilding before she can cross them and move on with her life. As Ginny herself comments, nothing is what it seems, whether memory, event, or character. Haitian cultural details, and the influences of art in Ginny's life are clearly but unobtrusively incorporated. Pullman moves as comfortably in this contemporary small town setting as he did in Victorian London in his previous novels, without sacrificing richness of plot or character. Unfortunately, the usual absurdity of translating British into American English is also maintained, while phrases in French and Welsh have been retained. The unusual setting; plot twists; and touches of pathos, humor, contemporary social concerns, and even voodoo, combine to make this an original treatment of concerns familiar to teenage readers--Who am I? How do I fit in? --Barbara Hutcheson, Greater Victoria Public Library, B.C., CanadaCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

I love Philip Pullman's novels. The His Dark Materials trilogy is so phenomenal that it inspired me to seek out other works of his--and thus I found The Broken Bridge. Now, is this the most believable story ever? No. But it's got a fairly unique and gripping set of characters who all feel vivid and real, even if some of the plot elements are a bit outlandish--and some are truly meant to be so. I found The Broken Bridge to be a very satisfying read, and in some ways I felt like I could see hints of Lyra and Will (from HDM trilogy) in the two young main characters. Pullman explores many complicated and controversial themes in this novel. I only wish the book had been longer in some ways, as I felt abandoned in my relationship with some of the characters at the end. Surely that is a sign of a novel with true appeal. (And if you like authors who have thoughtful writing approaches, check out Terry Pratchett and Avi. And of course, read The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, the Amber Spyglass, and the Sally Lockhart series by Philip Pullman, which are all fantastic!)

Philip Pullman will probably always be best known for the "His Dark Materials" trilogy. This may be appropriate, as this trilogy - The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife and The Amber Spyglass - are superior fantasy. But there is more to Pullman than these three books. The Broken Bridge is a standalone novel that shows Pullman's skills go beyond just a single genre. The Broken Bridge is the story of Ginny, a black (actually mixed-race) sixteen year old girl living in Wales with her white father. Despite the disadvantages of having a long-deceased mother (who came from Haiti) and being one of the very few non-whites in her coastal community, Ginny is reasonably well-adjusted.

This stable life comes to a close, however, when a social worker appears at her house. Shortly thereafter, her father reveals something that will completely upset her life: her father had a son by another woman; the woman is dying and soon her half-brother will be living with them. This revelation is only the first of many that will completely turn Ginny's life upside-down and make her question everything and everyone she has known. The most damaged relationship, however, is with her father who still has a number of other secrets that are beginning to leak out. But there are other truths that will be learned too, regarding her friends, her grandparents and her mother. This is classified as a "young adult" novel, as most of Pullman's books are, but like his other works, these can actually appeal to any adult readers. I would guess it gets this classification because it is tame from a sex, violence or language standpoint, but the topics - including racism, adultery and even murder - are not exactly "childish." Pullman is as good a writer as always. The only disappointment readers are likely to experience is if they expect something like His Dark Materials. Outside of possibly one scene, this story is completely non-fantasy. But if you realize that Pullman can do more than just that one genre, you will find this is another good book by him.

This is a wonderful book. I think it will resonate with many readers, who might relate to it even though the circumstances are unique. Philip Pullman has a powerful gift. It convinces us to not only enter into the minds of his protagonists with sympathy, but to emerge actually caring about them. I really miss Ginny now, having finished the book. I try, in my imagination, to watch her grow up. I think she'll be brilliant, just like many of the readers who can relate to her and her step-brother. As you begin reading the book, you're not told a whole lot; and I liked that. It made me more alert to cues in her thinking, watching her moods and the things that happen around her that she doesn't quite pay enough attention to. On the other hand, the things she *\*does\** notice are with the eyes of an artist, and one with a creative imagination. Readers who also like to draw and paint will find lots to like about the way Ginny thinks. It's a view of an artist's way, from an artist himself... and just like the best art, it moves something in us in a very subtle but profound way. The book deals with feelings of isolation, which many of us encounter through race issues but everyone *\*could\** understand, given a writer like Pullman. And then there's the matter of growing up. What happens when Ginny's secure world seems too small, but getting out of it is too scary? What happens when what she thinks she knows is not half of what's really there beneath her nose? Pullman makes her story a lot like our own story. We're hooked. Her growing awareness of others' lives, her ability to move from a genuine and thoughtful sympathy to actual empathy - putting herself in their shoes, rather than looking at their shoes from her perspective, so to speak - is handled so well, I can't help

but think we readers all benefit too.

Really confusing.. Didn't really enjoy it that much. It got a little better towards the end of the book, but I still don't recommend it.

Excellent story and coverage for young people of important social/family issues. Likeable characters.

good book

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