Recreating Lyra's red sweater coat from the Golden Compass

by Sarah Sutherland
sarah@parallaxknitting.com

Before you start:

I think there are several big issues with recreating this coat:

- It is impossible to get a really good close look at it. The pictures online are too small and the film itself moves around too much.
- The yarn/other materials that went into making it will be difficult to come by, and one can't really be sure what they were. I have read ([here](#)) that the coat wasn't even made out if yarn, but fabric strips, twine etc. This is going to be very difficult to duplicate because costume makers are just better equipped.
- I am not sure how much yarn it will take for you, but I know it will be a lot. If anyone wants to do this with yarn, I think it will take at least 2-4pounds (1.5-2kg) to make it. Mine weighs just over 3 pounds finished.

Difficulty

Easy, but as this is a set of instructions rather than a pattern you need to be adventurous.

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)

Size

Variable

Finished measurements

Variable

Materials

Variable, if you are doing this with yarn for an adult, you need a lot of yarn.

Gauge

Variable

Abbreviations

See http://www.yarnstandards.com/knit.html

Pattern

Swatch:

If you still feel the coat is worth pursuing, and you think you have enough yarn, you should make a generous swatch to make sure you can get colour and texture that pleases you. Then you should work out your gauge. I would say that you need super bulky or comparable different yarns held together, and the gauge should be around 7-8 sts to 4inches/10cm.

Amber from [Nakedly Knitting](#) has pointed out a good yarn to use for this coat ([here](#)), Noro's silk garden chunky, color 02. This is a beautiful yarn, and I am sure that the jacket she makes out of it will be gorgeous, but whether it is mimicking the coat in the Golden Compass depends on what is the most important thing about the design to you. If the general colour and shape are most important then this is a good substitute, and you can find garter stitch coat from a book or magazine and make a very good facsimile, but to me the most important thing about this jacket is the texture and colours. I love the way the colours slightly clash: the brown and the purple don't really go with the red ([see here](#)), but they come together to make it sing. Noro yarns are

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)

beautiful, but they are too harmonious to make this coat the way I envision it. The hint of green in it tones down the red (here); purple makes the red brighter. I also like the effect of the areas worked in slightly different thicknesses.

Gauge: 7 sts / 12 rows to 4 inches / 10cm. I knit this with between 4 and 7 strands held together at any time on US size 15 / 10mm needles.

I like the result. The colours are slightly, but only slightly, less lurid than the pictures. Please don't feel you need to match my gauge as the instructions are adjustable for size and gauge. A few notes on what I found working the swatch:

- The colours work better when the added colour is either lighter or darker than the main colour, having both darker and lighter strands together made it look odd.
- Any time you want to add another colour or strand you just hold it with your group. It's not going to unravel as the other threads will hold it.
- When you need a thread to go through to the back, you can poke it through with your finger.

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)

Measurements:

The next thing we need to do to recreate Lyra's sweater is get the measurements for the person the sweater is for. Here is a list of measurements that you will need to have measurements of (all measurements are over clothes like those you would be wearing under the coat):

- bust
- arm circumference
- neck circumference
- distance from shoulder to shoulder (from where you want the sleeves to begin, or to end of clavicles)
- distance from base of neck to shoulder (where you want the sleeves to begin, or to end of clavicle)
- distance from top of shoulder to line where underarm of sweater should be (an inch or two under the armpit)
- distance from shoulder to knee or preferred length

Here are my measurements in case you need an example or happen to be a women's medium, in which case you can knit the same pattern as me, though I think that takes away some of the fun:

- bust - 38 inches [97cm]
- arm circumference - 12 inches [30cm]
- neck circumference - 13 inches [33cm]
- distance from shoulder to shoulder - 14 inches [36cm]
- distance from base of neck to shoulder - 5 inches [13cm]
- distance from top of shoulder to line where underarm of sweater should be - 9 inches [23cm]
- distance from shoulder to knee - 42 inches [107cm]

If you are making this coat for a person whose belly or hips are much wider than her bust, you will need her measurement at her widest part as well, otherwise for most children or people without much difference in measurement you can knit straight. I have about a 4 inch difference between my bust and my hips, and I added a few stitches after the waist.

Construction:

- First work out and knit the collar for the coat.
- After the collar, pick up and knit stitches for the body of the sweater.
- Then knit down in one piece to the divide for the shoulders.
- Next knit the two fronts and back separately to the base of the armholes at which point, cast on some stitches for the underarms and continue knitting in one piece.
- Either at this point or at the end, pick up and knit stitches for the sleeves and work them straight to desired length.
- Continue knitting the body straight to the desired length.
- Then attach appropriate closures and show our lovely creations to the world (I am not including button holes in the pattern as the original didn't have any, if you want them, I suggest placing YO button holes at your discretion).

Pattern:

Collar:

We are now ready to work out and knit the collar. You will need the following information:

- Neck measurement (in inches or cm) = A
- Number of stitches per inch (or cm) = B
- Desired height of collar (in inches or cm) = C

Collar option 1:

Note: This option is cast on and worked from side to side making a stand up collar.

Equation: (A + 1 or 2 inches [2.5 or 5cm]) x B = number of stitches to cast on

Using the long tail method, cast on the number of stitches from the equation above and work until the collar is the desired length bind off.

Collar option 2:

Note: This option is worked from side to side then folded double lengthwise. This appears to be the way the original sweater was made, but I prefer the previous option for my sweater and my swatch appears to be a little thicker and stiffer than the original, so this option wouldn't have worked as well for me.

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)

Equation: (C x B x 2) = number of stitches to cast on

Using the long tail method, cast on the number of stitches from the previous equation, work until piece measures (A + 1 or 2 inches [2.5 or 5cm]), bind off.

Where A = the total number of stitches, C = the number of stitches for the back, and B = the number of front stitches.

Fronts:

Place the number of stitches for one of your fronts onto your needle and the rest of the stitches on holders. Work even until your piece measures the measurement you took of the distance from the shoulder to the line with the underarm. Repeat for other front.

Back:

Place the back stitches on your needle and work even as you did for the fronts. If you want to get fancy you can work your back slightly longer than the fronts to help it fit better.

My version:

Total number of stitches at the end of the yoke: 75.

75 / 2 = 37.5

Number of stitches for the back = 37

Number of stitches for the front = 38 or 19 for each side

Put 19 stitches at side onto a needle, work for 9 inches [23cm] straight.

Repeat for next side.

Put 37 stitches for back on needle and work 10 inches [25cm] straight.

Sleeves:

Your sweater should look something like this at this point:

Take the measurement of the circumference of your arm and add around 4 inches [10cm] ease to it (I am adding 4 inches [10cm] to my sleeve, when my arm over my sleeve is 12 inches [30cm], add a little more if you are knitting a larger sweater or less if you are knitting a smaller sweater).

Equation:

Measurement of arm = A
Ease = B
Gauge = C
Number of stitches to pick up for sleeves = D
$(A + B) * C = D$

With right side of piece facing you, pick up and knit the number of stitches you just worked out in the previous step along the arm rise, from right (so that your first row will be a wrong side row).

Knit to approximately 2.5 inches [6cm] after the middle of the arm rise, turn and make a yarn over over the right needle (you will knit this yarn over together with the next stitch on the next row). Knit for approximately 5 inches [12cm], turn working yarn over as for last row, work to end of previous row, knit YO with next stitch, work 3 more stitches, turn with yarn over as for previous row.

Continue with short rows, working 3 stitches further each row and using short row yarn overs to close the holes until all the stitches you picked up are worked.

Work straight until sleeve is desired length, bind off.

My version:

A = 12 inches [30cm]

B = 4 inches [10cm]

C = 1.75 stitches / inch [0.7 stitches / cm]

(12 inches [30cm] + 4 inches [10cm]) x 1.75 stitches / inch [0.7 stitches / cm] = D

16 inches [40cm] x 1.75 stitches / inch [0.7 stitches / cm] = 28 sts

Pick up and knit 28 sts.

K 18, turn, yo, k8, turn, yo, k11, turn, yo . . .

Work until all stitches are picked up, work until sleeves are desired length.

Cast on stitches at underarms and work body of sweater:

The sleeves are completed and it is now time to put the live stitches from the body back on your needles and cast on some stitches for the underarms. The first thing you need to do is measure how large your sweater is without casting on for underarms. This means you should measure your two front halves and the back. These numbers combined are how large the sweater is now.

Next, you will need to work out how big it should be. I made mine with about 6 inches [15cm] ease. This is because I want the sweater to drape like a coat, and coats tend to be bigger, and because the fabric is so thick the inside will be smaller than the outside. (thank you Elizabeth Zimmerman). If your sweater is much smaller, i.e. child's

size, you may want to have slightly less ease (4-5 inches [10-12cm], but that is up to you.

Subtract how big your sweater is from how big you want it to be, this will give you how much you need to cast on for. Divide this amount by two for each underarm and multiply it my your gauge, this will give you the number of stitches to cast on under each arm. Put all the live stitches onto a long needle (I think you will need a long circular needle for this), which will fold the sleeves in half. If you find that you didn't end one end in the right direction and you will not start your garter stitch on the same (right side or wrong side) row, work one row to make it even.

Starting at the beginning of the row of the stitches you have on your needle, work to the first sleeve, cast on the number of stitches you worked out in the previous step; repeat for the second underarm. You will now have enough stitches on your needle for the complete body of the sweater.

At this point you can decide to work straight until the end of the garment, in which case, you can bid farewell to my instructions, such as they are. Just keep going until you are happy, bind off, sew on your preferred method of closure, sew the sleeve seams, wash the sweater (if you are using old stash yarn and your sweater smells a little fusty), block/dry it, and enjoy.

My version:

My sweater without casting on at underarms is as follows:

(11 inches [28cm] x 2 fronts) + 23 inches [58cm] = 45 inches [114cm]

If you think back to the measurement stage, my bust with clothes is 38 inches [97cm]

45 inches [114cm] - (38 inches [97cm] + 6 inches [15cm]) = -1 inch [-2cm]

My sweater turned out to be big enough already, so I will just start knitting the body, but if you need any added under the arms, follow those directions here.

I found that sewing the sleeve seams made the knitting easier, so I did that now, but that is a matter of preference. If you added stitches under the arms, sew the beginnings of the sleeves to the underarm stitches, then sew the rest of the sleeve seam straight.

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)

Finishing

Attach the front fastening of your choice. I crocheted buttons and frogs, if you want to make them like mine, please see the tutorial here:

http://parallaxknitting.com/2008/04/tutorial-crochet-buttons/.

Wash and block your coat, especially if you used old hand me down yarn like I did, as the coat was musty.

Done.

About the designer

Sarah loves the movies and has created a whole category of movie that she likes just because of the costumes. The Golden Compass did not actually fall into this category, but the costumes were absolutely transporting.

This pattern is free for your personal use, if you want to use for commercial purposes, please contact the designer (sarah@parallaxknitting.com)