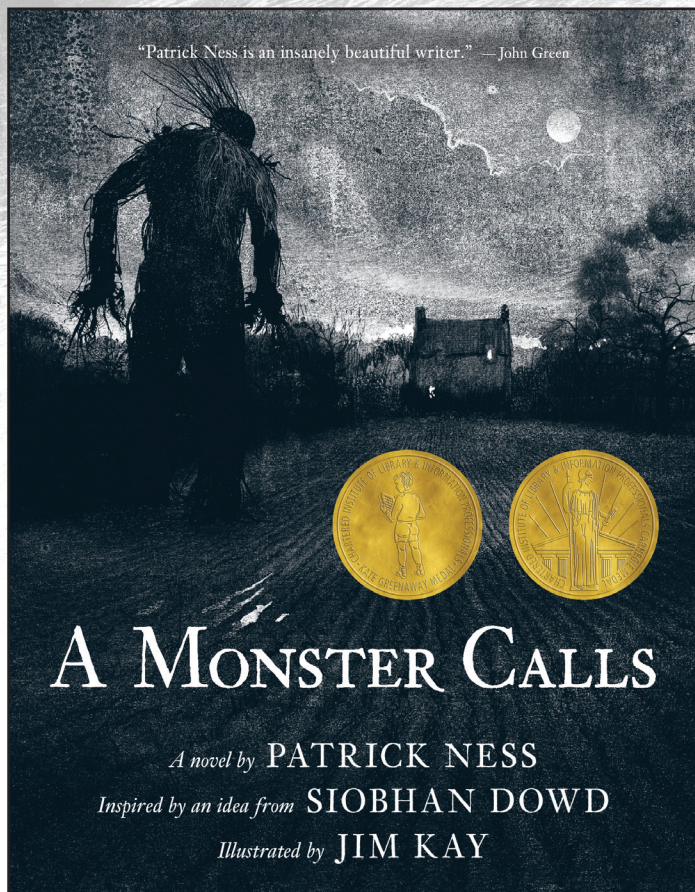


A MONSTER CALLS

by
PATRICK NESS
Inspired by an idea from
SIOBHAN DOWD

Illustrations by **JIM KAY**



HC: 978-0-7636-5559-4 • Illustrated PB: 978-0-7636-6065-9
PB: 978-0-7636-6908-9 • E-book: 978-0-7636-5633-1

ABOUT THE BOOK

The monster showed up after midnight. As they do. But it isn't the monster that thirteen-year-old Conor has been expecting. He's been expecting the one from his nightmare, the one he's had nearly every night since his mother started her treatments, the one with the darkness and the wind and the screaming. This monster is something different. Something ancient, something wild. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth.

Patrick Ness spins a tale from the final story idea of Siobhan Dowd, whose premature death from cancer prevented her from writing it herself. Darkly mischievous and painfully funny, *A Monster Calls* is an extraordinarily moving novel about coming to terms with loss, from two of our finest writers for young adults.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "You're a good boy," Conor's mother tells him. "I wish you didn't have to be quite *so* good" (page 17). What does she mean by that? Why does Conor have to be so good?
2. How does the monster describe itself to Conor? Where does the monster come from? What does it want? Do you think that the monster is real, or is it a product of Conor's imagination? What does Conor think?
3. Lily was once Conor's closest friend, but now he can't forgive her. Why? Is he right to feel betrayed? How do most people behave around Conor once they learn about his mother's illness? What would you have done in Lily's situation?
4. "Stories are wild creatures," the monster says. "When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?" (page 51). What does the monster mean by this? In what ways does the rest of novel prove the monster's point?
5. Discuss the role that humor plays in this novel. Where are the best comic moments? Describe the monster's sense of humor. Would you enjoy the monster's company?
6. "Sometimes people need to lie to themselves most of all," the monster tells Conor (page 62). Is Conor lying to himself about his mother's illness? Is his mother lying to herself? What does each of them need to believe? Why?

7. Look closely at the illustrations. How do they capture the tone of the novel? How do they express the range of Conor's emotions?
8. Who is the hero of the monster's first tale? Who is the villain? How does the story keep surprising Conor? What does Conor hope to learn from the story? What does he actually learn?
9. Discuss Conor's relationship with his father. What have they shared over the years? Why does Conor want to live with his father now? Why does his father say no?
10. In the monster's second tale, whose home is destroyed? Why? What does the story inspire Conor to do? Why does he enjoy doing it? How does Conor's grandmother respond to his actions? Why?
11. Conor's monster appears to him in the form of a giant yew tree. What is the medicinal value of the tree? How effective is it as a treatment for his mother's illness? Why does she want to believe it will help?
12. Harry, the school bully, looks straight into Conor's eyes and says, "I no longer see you" (page 145). Why is this such a cruel thing to say? How does Conor make himself impossible to miss?
13. Describe Conor's recurring nightmare. How does it usually end? What changes when the monster demands the truth? What is more painful to Conor than the death of his mother? Why does he need to be honest?
14. At the very end of the novel, what does Conor say to his mother? Why must he say it? Why must she hear it?
15. The authors' note explains that Patrick Ness wrote this novel based on an idea from Siobhan Dowd. Why was Patrick Ness initially reluctant to take on the project? What persuaded him to change his mind? Even though it's impossible to know for sure, do you believe Siobhan Dowd would have liked the finished book? Why or why not?

About Author PATRICK NESS

Patrick Ness is the author of the acclaimed Chaos Walking trilogy for young adults: *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, *The Ask and the Answer*, and *Monsters of Men*. Born in Virginia, he lived in Hawaii, Washington, and California before settling in England. He never met Siobhan Dowd, but he came to know her through her superb novels.

About Author SIOBHAN DOWD

Siobhan Dowd completed four novels before her untimely death in 2007, including *The London Eye Mystery* and *Bog Child*, for which she was posthumously awarded the 2009 Carnegie Medal.

Also by PATRICK NESS

The Knife of Never Letting Go
 HC: 978-0-7636-3931-0
 PB: 978-0-7636-4576-2
 E-book: 978-0-7636-5216-6

The Ask and the Answer
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 HC: 978-0-7636-4751-3
 PB: 978-0-7636-5665-2
 E-book: 978-0-7636-5211-1



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