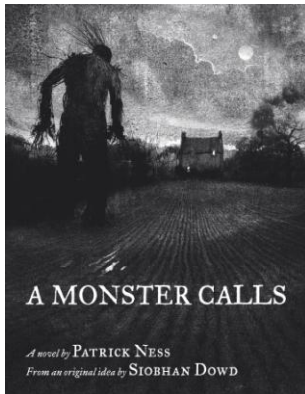


TALKING POINTS

CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2012



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness (from an original idea by Siobhan Dowd)

FRIEND OR FOE?

"The good guys turn out to be bad and the bad guys good," Frank Cottrell Boyce stated when reviewing *A Monster Calls* for *The Guardian*. The tree monster that invades says "There is not always a good guy. Nor is there always a bad one. Most people are somewhere inbetween."

- Which statement do you think is closer to the truth?

Think about the people in Conor's life besides his mother, who is dying of cancer:

- His father
- His friend Lily
- His other schoolfriends
- His grandmother
- Miss Kwan, his teacher
- The Headmistress

- Who does Conor reject who turns out to be supportive to him?
- Who does he expect to support him who does not behave in a helpful way?
- Who helps him more than he expected?
- Who understands best how to help him?
- What is the least helpful thing that Conor's friends do?

THE MONSTER WITHIN

Conor has nightmares about the tree monster that infests his bedroom, but his problems happen during the day.

- What in his everyday life is he afraid of?
- What makes him angry?
- What are Conor's strongest feelings about what is happening to his mother?
- How do his feelings affect him?
- What are his grandmother's feelings about what is happening to her daughter?
- How do her feelings affect her?

The monster says he visited Conor because Conor had called for him. Is this true?

THE HEALING ART: THE MONSTER'S STORIES

When the monster insists on telling Conor stories, what does Conor think the stories will be like? Are they what he expected?

- Think of examples of stories that are meant to teach: for example folk and fairy tales, myths from many cultures and the parables of the New Testament.



JOIN THE DEBATE
www.ckg.org.uk/shadowing

- What is the message of the monster's first story about the prince and the farmer's daughter? How does it apply to Conor's family life?
- What is the message of the second story about the Apothecary? Why is it important that the story is told by a yew tree about a yew tree?

In the second story, the monster states: "Belief is half of all healing. Belief in the cure, belief in the future that awaits."

- Does this turn out to be true for Conor?
- What is the cure that Conor takes from the story?

What is the message of the third story about the invisible man?

- Why does Conor want to be punished at the end of the story?

A SLOW ENDING

- How do we know that Conor's mother wants to die?
- What will help her die in the way she wants to?
- How has the structure and pace of *A Monster Calls* helped the reader to deal with the strong emotions contained in it?
- How does the placement of the illustrations help to break up the story?

READ ON: Find other examples of stories that use a repetitive structure to powerful effect, such as

- *A Christmas Carol*: Three ghosts visit a man to show him the past, present and future.
- *Tom's Midnight Garden*: Time stands still every night to allow another life to be lived.

