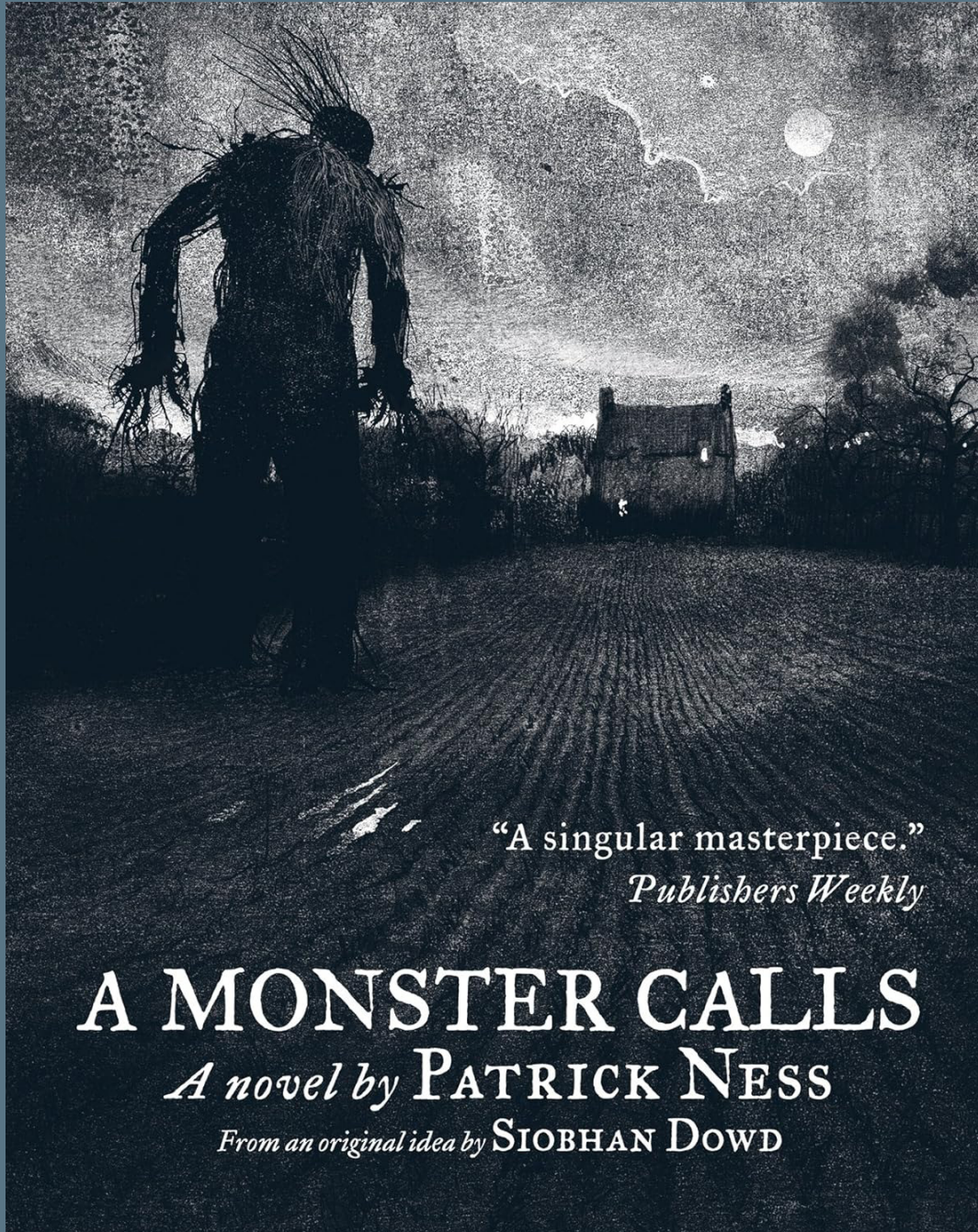


# EMC Teaching a Novel:

# A Monster Calls



"A singular masterpiece."  
*Publishers Weekly*

## A MONSTER CALLS

*A novel by* PATRICK NESS

*From an original idea by* SIOBHAN DOWD

Written and edited by Dan Raphael and Andrew McCallum

English and Media Centre, 2025

## Acknowledgements

Sources of public domain images used in the pack

Grendel:

<https://picryl.com/media/stories-of-beowulf-grendel-adf6c1>

Smaug:

<https://www.goodfon.com/films/wallpaper-by-sugarpoultry-art-khobbit-smaug-drakon-sokrovishcha.html>

The Minotaur:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/72/DnD\\_Minotaur.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/72/DnD_Minotaur.png)

Yew Tree:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient\\_Yew\\_tree,\\_St\\_Andrews\\_Churchyard\\_%28geograph\\_5305743%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Yew_tree,_St_Andrews_Churchyard_%28geograph_5305743%29.jpg)

Quotes:

The quote from Patrick Ness is taken from a Guardian interview available at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jun/14/carnegie-patrick-ness>

## Download licence

- ▶ Permission is granted to reproduce this download publication for personal and educational use within the purchasing institution (including its Virtual Learning Environments and intranet). Redistribution beyond the institution by any means, including electronic, will constitute an infringement of copyright.
- ▶ Institution is understood to be the individual school, college or campus, whether or not part of a Trust, MAT or Group.
- ▶ Individual schools, colleges, campuses within a Trust, MAT or Group each require their own copy of a download publication. This will be added to the portal of the individual school, college or campus.



# CONTENTS

---

Note for Teachers	5
A Monster Calls - Before Reading	7
▶ Thinking About Monsters in Stories	7
▶ Creating Your Own Monster	9
A Monster Calls - During Reading	10
After Reading Chapters 1 and 2 (A Monster Calls; Breakfast)	10
▶ Revisiting Your Description of a Monster	10
▶ Possible Journal Entry	11
After Reading Chapters 3-6 (School; Life Writing; Three Stories; Grandma)	12
▶ Writing from Another Character's Point of View	12
▶ The Monster - Real or Imagined?	12
▶ Possible Journal Entry	13
Chapters 7, 8, 9 The Wildness of Stories; The First Tale; The Rest Of The First Tale	14
▶ Thinking about the Monster's Words	14
▶ Possible Journal Entry	14
Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 (Understanding; Little Talk; Grandma's House; Champ; Americans Don't Get Much Holiday)	15
▶ Conversations Between Conor and His Dad	15
▶ Possible Journal Entry	15
Chapter 15, 16, 17, 18 (The Second Tale; The Rest of the Second Tale; Destruction; Invisible)	16
▶ Pushing Your Thinking Further	16
▶ Possible Journal Entry	16
Chapter 19, 20, 21 (Yew Trees; Could it Be?; No Tale)	17
▶ Debating Statements	17

Chapter 22-23 I No Longer See You; The Third Tale	18
▶ Reaction to the Fight	18
▶ Possible Journal Entry	18
Chapters 24-26 (Punishment; A Note; 100 Years)	19
▶ Possible Journal Entry	19
▶ The Nightmare	19
Chapters 27-29 (What's The Use Of You?; The Fourth Tale; The Rest Of The Fourth Tale)	20
▶ The Nightmare	20
▶ Possible Journal Entry	20
Chapters 30-32 (Life After Death; Something In Common; The Truth)	21
▶ Thoughts Upon Finishing	21
▶ What's the Book About?	21
▶ Writing Your Final Journal Entry	22
After Reading	23
▶ A Teenage Perspective?	23
▶ The Novel's Advice to Readers	23
▶ The Novel's Structure	24
▶ Telling the Story	27
▶ Thinking About How <i>A Monster Calls</i> is Written	28
▶ Reading and Writing Reviews	29
▶ How Good is <i>A Monster Calls</i> ?	30
▶ Extended Writing - Tell Us How Good <i>A Monster Calls</i> Is	31
▶ Creative Writing Tasks	32
▶ Watching the Film Adaptation of <i>A Monster Calls</i>	33
▶ An Interview with the Director	34

# A MONSTER CALLS – BEFORE READING

---

## Thinking About Monsters in Stories

As suggested by the title of the book, a monster is of central importance in Patrick Ness's novel.

- Before you start reading, in small groups discuss your favourite monsters from books you have read, stories you have heard, films or TV shows you have watched, or video games you have played.
- Make a list of the monsters and what makes them memorable.
- Discuss why you think people have always told stories with monsters in them.
- Share your lists and ideas around the class.

If you are stuck, take a look at some of the famous monsters. on page 8.

- ▶ What is striking about them?
- ▶ Why do you think they have captured the imagination of so many people for so many years?



## Creating Your Own Monster

In *A Monster Calls*, the monster emerges from a yew tree, like the one pictured below. Yew trees have a very special place in the British imagination for several reasons. An evergreen variety of tree, they can live to be up to 3000 years old (so coming to be associated with immortality), they can be found in many graveyards (so coming to be associated with death) and they are incredibly poisonous to humans and animals.

- In small groups discuss how you might create a monster out of a tree like this. You can use these questions to get your conversation going.
  - ▶ What does the monster look like?
  - ▶ How does the monster move?
  - ▶ What sounds does it make?
  - ▶ Does the monster have a particular smell?
  - ▶ How does the monster transform from being just a tree?
  - ▶ Does the monster have any strengths or special powers?
- On your own write a description of your yew tree monster. If you like, you can describe meeting it yourself. As well as describing its appearance, you might like to write about what it makes you feel and think.
- Put your descriptions to one side, ready to come back to them after you have read the first two chapters.



## Chapters 7, 8, 9 The Wildness of Stories; The First Tale; The Rest Of The First Tale

### Thinking About the Monster's Words

- Here are two things the Monster says in the first story:

‘Sometimes people need to lie to themselves most of all.’

‘There is not always a good guy. Nor is there always a bad one. Most people are somewhere in between.’

- As a whole class, discuss the significance of these statements to what you have read of *A Monster Calls* so far. In what ways do you think each one might be important as the novel progresses?

### Possible Journal Entry

#### Discussion - Generating Ideas, Clarifying Thoughts

You are going to use role-play to generate ideas for your next journal entry.

- Working in pairs, take it in turns to role-play being the writer, Patrick Ness. In role, answer some or all of the following questions.
  - ▶ Why did you make Conor respond sarcastically to the Monster?
  - ▶ Are the Monster's views about stories the same as your own? What does the Monster mean by 'stories are wild creatures... When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?'
  - ▶ Why did you make Conor interrupt the Monster's story several times?
  - ▶ Why did you make the prince behave as he does?
  - ▶ Do you want your readers to take a moral or message from the monster's first story? If so, what would it be?
  - ▶ What do you like about these chapters?

### Writing Your Journal Entry

- Drawing on your discussion and ideas of your own, write your journal entry.
- Share examples of journal entries around the whole class, or in small groups.
- After listening to these entries, make a note in your journal of any new ideas you find particularly interesting and any new questions you have.

## Chapters 24-26 Punishment; A Note; 100 Years

### Possible Journal Entry

#### Discussion - Generating Ideas, Clarifying Thoughts

- In small groups discuss the chapters you have just read. You might like to think about:
  - ▶ What surprised you
  - ▶ Conor's conversation with his headteacher
  - ▶ Lily's note to Conor
  - ▶ Conor's mum's condition and Conor's reaction to her news
  - ▶ Your own emotional response to these chapters
  - ▶ What you think will happen next.

#### Writing Your Journal Entry

- Drawing on your discussion and ideas of your own, write your journal entry.
- Share examples of journal entries around the whole class, or in small groups.
- After listening to these entries, make a note in your journal of any new ideas you find particularly interesting and any new questions you have.

### The Nightmare

In the next section of the novel, the monster and Conor will travel inside Conor's nightmare. At the beginning of the novel, the monster says that Conor hides a truth and it is the thing that Conor is most afraid of.

- Finish writing Conor's nightmare. To remind yourself of what happens go back to the first page of the first chapter, and then continue writing after: 'The one with the hands slipping from his grasp, no matter how hard he tried to hold on. The one that always ended with...'