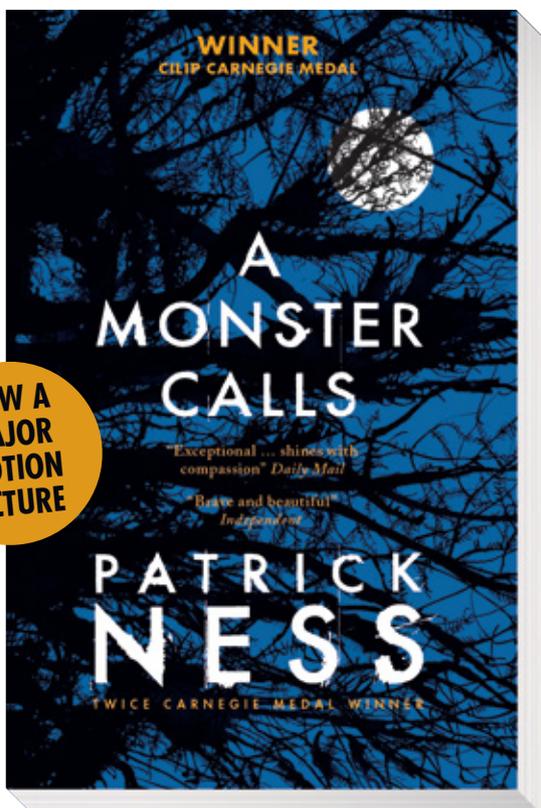


## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# A MONSTER CALLS



9781406361803 • £7.99 • Paperback  
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**“Electrifying”**  
*Telegraph*

**“Brilliant and elegant”**  
*Guardian*

AN EXTRAORDINARY NOVEL OF LOVE,  
LOSS AND HOPE FROM BESTSELLING  
NOVELIST PATRICK NESS

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth.

Bestselling novelist Patrick Ness takes the final idea of the late, award-winning writer Siobhan Dowd and weaves a heartbreaking tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the monster represent to Conor? Do you perceive it as real or as a product of Conor's imagination?
2. Why does Conor feel so lonely and isolated? Is he right to feel betrayed by Lily?
3. “Stories are wild creatures,” the monster says. “When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?” What does the monster mean by this? In which ways does the rest of the novel prove the monster's point?
4. Discuss the role that humour plays in this novel. Where are the best comic moments?
5. “Sometimes people need to lie to themselves most of all,” the monster tells Conor. In what sense is Conor lying to himself? Is his mother lying to herself? What does each of them need to believe?

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

6. “This is all sounding pretty fairy tale-ish,” Conor says to the monster. However, the monster’s stories deviate from the traditional fairy tale norm. Why does the monster play with Conor’s expectations? What do the stories teach him?
7. Conor’s reactions to the stories become increasingly violent. Although the adults in the novel absolve him of responsibility, is he to blame for his actions? Why is the lack of punishment important to Conor?
8. Conor’s monster appears to him in the form of a giant yew tree. What is the medicinal value of the tree? What does the yew traditionally symbolize and how is this relevant to the novel?
9. Harry, the school bully, looks straight into Conor’s eyes and says, “I no longer see you”. Why is it important to Conor that people ‘see’ him?
10. Describe Conor’s recurring nightmare. How does it usually end? What changes when the monster demands the truth? What is more painful for Conor to admit than the death of his mother?
  11. At the very end of the novel what does Conor say to his mother? Why must he say it? Why must she hear it?
12. The authors’ note explains that Patrick Ness wrote the novel based on an idea by Siobhan Dowd. He tells the reader to “Go. Run with it. Make trouble.” Discuss the ways in which the novel shows that stories have a life of their own.

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### ABOUT PATRICK NESS



Patrick Ness is the author of the award-winning and bestselling Chaos Walking trilogy and the critically-acclaimed novels *More Than This*, *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* and *Release*. His new novel, *And the Ocean Was Our Sky*, will be released in 2018. John Green has described him as “an insanely beautiful writer”. He has won every major prize in children’s fiction, including the Carnegie Medal twice. He has written the screenplay for the film of *A Monster Calls*, now a major motion picture, and the BBC Doctor Who spin-off, *Class*. The first *Chaos Walking* film is slated for release in 2019. He lives in London.

### ABOUT SIOBHAN DOWD

Siobhan Dowd was the widely loved prize-winning author of four books, two of which were published after her death from cancer in 2007, aged 47. In 2009, she became the first author ever to be posthumously awarded the *Carnegie Medal*.

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