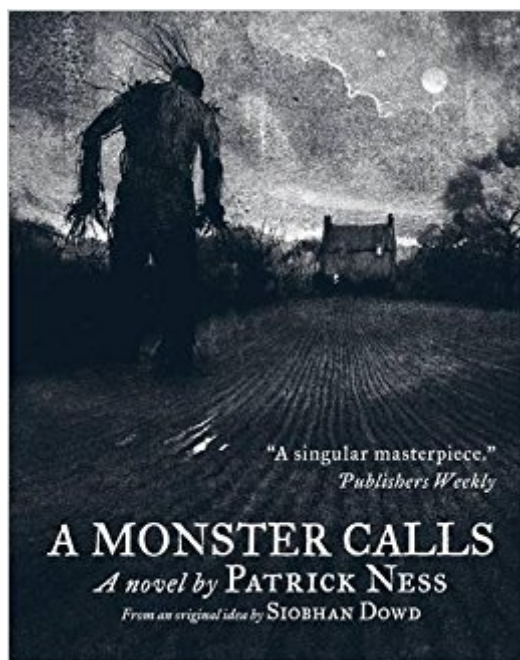


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# A Monster Calls. Patrick Ness, Siobhan Dowd



## Synopsis

An extraordinarily moving novel about coming to terms with loss. The monster showed up just after midnight. As they do. But it isn't the monster Conor's 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... The monster in his back garden, though, this monster is something different. Something ancient, something wild. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth. Costa Award winner Patrick Ness spins a tale from the final idea of much-loved Carnegie Medal winner 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 of coming to terms with loss from two of our finest writers for young adults.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Moving and compelling . . . outstanding writing \* The East Anglian Times \* A haunting narrative dominated by symbol and atmosphere -- Robert Dunbar \* Irish Times \* Incredibly thought-provoking and emotional . . . a complete stunner of a book which I couldn't rate anything below five out of five stars. I loved it! \* UKYA \* Dark and dangerous, beautifully illustrated and even a bit hopeful. \* Charlie Fletcher, author of the Stoneheart trilogy \* emotionally powerful \* Daily Express \* "It is a novel that does not shy away from the harsh realities that we all have to face from time to time. As such, it is sometimes uncomfortable, often heart-breaking and always true. [...] *A Monster Calls*

teaches us about the importance of confronting the truth - no matter how unpleasant or monstrous it may seem." \* Buckinghamshire Life \*

Patrick Ness is the author of the critically-acclaimed and bestselling Chaos Walking trilogy. He has won numerous awards including the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, the Booktrust Teenage Prize, the Costa Children's Book Award and the Carnegie Medal. He lives in Bromley, Kent. Siobhan Dowd was the widely-loved, prize-winning author of four books, two of which were published after her death from cancer, aged 47. In 2009, she became the first author ever posthumously awarded the Carnegie Medal. Jim Kay studied illustration and worked in the archives of the Tate Gallery and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, two experiences that heavily influence his work. His images for A Monster Calls use everything from beetles to bread boards to create interesting marks and textures. He lives in Kettering, Northamptonshire.

I have been reading aloud to my twins every night, and I thought this might be a book they would enjoy, because of the illustrations. I ended up finishing it with them within 24 hours. You know how you come across a book, and after reading it, you feel like EVERYONE needs to read it as well? That is how I felt with this book. As a mother, this book ripped my heart to shreds, and put me in an emotional state as I was reading it to my sons. But it was worth every tear I shed. Guys, if you haven't read this book, Do it! The story, the writing, the illustrations, this book was pure perfection and a total 5 out of 5 stars for me. If you have read this, what were your thoughts?

Beautifully written and hauntingly illustrated, Ness's novel tells the story of Conor, a young boy who suffers from a recurring nightmare about his mother, who is ill with cancer. Practically friendless - save for a girl named Lily, whom Conor seems to shun - and bullied in school, Conor copes with his loneliness and fear by calling on a monster who appears to him in the form of a yew tree. The monster whose real purpose grows apparent as the novel progresses - tells Conor three stories in preparation for hearing Conor tell his own story. A narrative about the truth and knowledge contained within stories and their inherent ability to empower us, Ness's novel tackles the experience of youthful trauma with sensitivity, poignancy, and grace. It's the first of his novels that I've read, but it certainly will not be the last.

We tend to have all these preconceptions about how a story should unfold: the good guys win, the line between good and evil is well-defined, there should be an overall theme or lesson. But that's not always how it is and oftentimes we feel cheated when our expectations or desires are not met. Such is the case with life. This book uses a supernatural being (a monster) to convey a very important albeit difficult real-life message: that in order to heal we must come to terms with reality, in all its bitterness, and with ourselves, as the complex human beings that we are. Our feelings are not black and white, life is full of loss and pain, and things don't always work out just because we believe they will. This is reality. It is the truth. And we need to accept it. To move on and truly live, we need to meet life on life's terms and take responsibility for ourselves. Usually I don't read books with pictures, but boy am I glad I gave this one a go. The pictures are brilliant. They're dark and dreamlike, creepy yet beautiful, and perfectly placed. They accentuate the book nicely.

Patrick Ness knows that of which he writes. The feeling of relief is real. Was real. I remember it, but I rarely spoke of it. Different readers will be at different stages of grief. I am not a psychiatrist, I am someone who has lost a son in the military and later a wife because of a unidentified pulmonary disease. The disease took three years to kill her. (It is hard to write those words.) I sought grief counseling for me and my family before the loss of my wife and their mother - while she was dying. I also read books that helped a lot - almost all recommended by someone. From my experience with grief, I do not believe giving this book to someone who just learned they will lose someone they love would be a good idea. It seems to me that it would help a person who has gotten past Denial; someone who is where Conor was at the end of the book. It would be an affirming book at that time for them. Perhaps this book will get reviews by professionals as well as those like myself sharing experience. I related to much of the feelings of the main character, Conor. But my loss was as a husband rather than a young son. I still had three teens at home. And, my loss was because of an illness lasting three years. I had accepted my wife's condition was terminal sometime in the first year. Conor's experience seemed to span a much shorter time and death occurred very soon after his acceptance. To me, that seems to have been a sudden loss. A sudden loss, or one in which the hope that death will be avoided endures, is not the same as my experience. I never had a monster even when my wife and I were separately and together ready for it to be over in the last months. Most significant to me is that my wife and I, having believed Jesus, we are going to Heaven and that we can want to go. I do not see that in Conor's life and it makes a difference. The book does not tell what Conor thinks will happen to his mom after she dies. You can read that a monster took his mom or you can read that he felt like a monster because of his internal emotions about her death. There

are stages of grief and having a counselor to help you understand what is happening to you is really worth it. A book helps but it is not the same at all. And books can be helpful at different times as events happen. This book deals with denial, bargaining, and anger. As I read it I felt the book was best for someone who has accepted that their loved one will die. After the person dies, we say 'you must move on'. Well, yes, you do - but...Another book, "Don't Take My Grief Away From Me" by Doug Manning and Glenda Stansbury (also on ) deals with how people differ in 'moving on' with their lives. I needed that book. (I also gave a copy of the book to a couple of people so they would 'back off' from me and my children.) The Manning / Stansbury book helped me with acceptance and a self-comfort that my grieving was 'normal' after my wife died. I am not sure when I would have wanted Ness' book. I think that a few weeks after I believed my wife was probably going to die and when I was dreading what we were going to have to deal with, "A Monster Calls" would have helped. I can say I am glad Patrick Ness wrote this book and I pray it gets into the hands of many who need it.

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