

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	J. Cherubino	School:	OLMS
Book Title:	A Monster Calls	Genre:	Fantasy
Author:	Patrick Ness	Pages:	224
Publisher:	Candlewick Press	Copyright:	2011

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

An unflinching, darkly funny, and deeply moving story of a boy, his seriously ill mother, and an unexpected monstrous visitor. At seven minutes past midnight, thirteen-year-old Conor wakes to find a monster outside his bedroom window. But it isn't the monster Conor's been expecting— he's been expecting the one from his nightmare, the nightmare he's had nearly every night since his mother started her treatments. The monster in his backyard is different. It's ancient. And wild. And it wants something from Conor. Something terrible and dangerous. It wants the truth. From the final idea of award-winning author Siobhan Dowd— whose premature death from cancer prevented her from writing it herself— Patrick Ness has spun a haunting and darkly funny novel of mischief, loss, and monsters both real and imagined. This book won the Carnegie Medal for children's literature.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

RL.8.1-Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. RL.8.2-Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.8.3-Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. RL.8.6-Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

BookList:

/* Starred Review */ Grades 7-10 After the stylistic feats and dumbfounding originality of Ness' Chaos Walking trilogy, this follow-up effort comes as something of a surprise—an earthbound story concocted from a premise left behind by the late Siobhan Dowd. As Conor watches his mother succumb to cancer, he is pummeled by grief, anger, isolation, helplessness, and something even

darker. At night, when he isn't trapped in a recurring nightmare too terrible to think about, he is visited by a very real monster in the form of a giant yew tree. The monster tells Conor three ambiguous, confusing stories, then demands a final one from the boy, one that "will tell me your truth." Meanwhile, Conor's mom tears through ineffective treatments, and Conor simmers with rage: "Everybody always wants to have a talk lately." But all that really happens is a lot of pussyfooting around the central, horrible fact that his mother is dying, and what does the monster mean about "the truth" anyway? A story with such moribund inevitability could easily become a one-note affair—or, worse, forgettable—but small, surgically precise cuts of humor and eeriness provide a crucial magnifying effect. Moreover, Ness twists out a resolution that is revelatory in its obviousness, beautiful in its execution, and fearless in its honesty. Kay's artwork keeps the pace, gnawing at the edges of the pages with thundercloud shadows and keeping the monster just barely, terribly seeable. Sidestepping any trace of emotional blackmail, Ness shines Dowd's glimmer into the deepest, most hidden darkness of doubt, and finds a path through. -- Chipman, Ian (Reviewed 07-01-2011) (Booklist, vol 107, number 21, p52)

Review #2

School Library Journal:

/ Starred Review */* Gr 7 Up — Conor O'Malley, 13, is having a difficult time. At school, he copes with bullying and loneliness. His father is living in America with his new family, and at home he has to contend with a recurring nightmare that torments him every night. His mother is seriously ill and undergoing painful cancer treatments. One night, he wakes up to a voice calling his name. An ancient, treelike monster, hovering over him like a sleeping giant, has come to tell him three stories. When the monster is done, he wishes for Conor to tell him a fourth tale, wanting the scariest thing of all—the truth. The wise monster's ambiguous tales contain unexpected outcomes and help demonstrate that not all stories have happy endings, but they can be more important than anything else if they carry the truth. Conor has to accept the truth about his mother's prognosis and letting go, even if it means losing her. Only then can he start to heal, without destroying himself in the process. This is an extraordinarily moving story inspired by an idea from author Siobhan Dowd before she passed away. Kay's shadowy illustrations slither along the borders of the pages and intermingle with text to help set its dark, mysterious mood, while Conor is often seen as a silhouette. A brilliantly executed, powerful tale.—Krista Welz, North Bergen Public Library, NJ --Krista Welz (Reviewed September 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 9, p164)

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: **Looking for Alaska**

Author: **John Green**

Title: **The Book Thief**

Author: **Markus Zusak**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

There is sensitive material, not really controversial. The whole story revolves around Conor losing his mother to cancer. It would need to be discussed with respect to everyone's personal experiences.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable): Lexile 730

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 4/7/2014

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults