

Parents' Guide to *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness

Grade Levels: 9–12

Lexile Level: 730L

Genre: Low Fantasy/Realistic Fiction

Publisher: Walker Books Ltd

ISBN: 978-1406361803

Page Count: ~237 pages

About the Book

A Monster Calls tells the story of Conor O'Malley, a young teen struggling to cope with his mother's serious illness. One night, a mysterious monster begins visiting him, telling stories that challenge Conor to confront his deepest fears and emotions. Blending fantasy with realism, the novel explores grief, truth, and the complexity of human emotions in the face of loss.

Educational Value

This novel supports key literacy and social-emotional learning goals:

- **Literary Analysis:** Students can explore symbolism, allegory, and nonlinear storytelling.
- **Critical Thinking:** The story encourages reflection on emotional honesty and alternative perspectives.
- **Social & Emotional Growth:** *A Monster Calls* helps students process themes of grief, anger, denial, acceptance, and love.
- **Cross-Curricular Engagement:** The novel connects to science (medicine and health), religion (pastoral care), and fine arts (visual media/illustrations).

Discussion Topics for Home

- Why does the monster visit Conor, and what purpose do its stories serve?
- How do grief and fear affect the way people act toward each other in this book and in the real world?
- How does the novel show that people can feel more than one emotion at the same time? When have you felt conflicting emotions in your life?
- Conor experiences raw grief and confusion. How does [Psalm 13:1-6](#) affirm that it is okay to bring anger, doubt, and sadness to God?
- What does the story suggest about truth—even when it is painful? How does that message connect to [John 8:32](#)?
- In [John 11:35](#), even Jesus himself experiences grief. How might this comfort someone like Conor?

Why We're Reading *A Monster Calls*

This novel offers a meaningful way to explore difficult emotions through storytelling. It encourages empathy, self-reflection, and viewing grief and healing through a pastoral lens. Its combination of fantasy and realism allows students to engage with complex emotional experiences in a safe and thoughtful way.