



A Monster Calls

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

'Stories are important,' the monster said to Conor. 'They can be more important than anything. If they carry the truth.'

This remarkable book by Patrick Ness was developed from an original idea by Siobhan Dowd. In his introductory note, he explains that she left the characters, premise and beginning. He took these ideas, developed new themes and wrote in his own style.

The book is the story of Conor aged 13. He has a recurring nightmare about his mother, who is undergoing treatment for a degenerative disease, slipping from his grasp into a dark abyss. However this nightmare is overshadowed by the appearance of a monster transformed from a yew tree, the Green Man, Herne the Hunter, a figure from ancient legend who has come walking to deal with matters of life and death. Yew trees are symbolic of healing and everlasting life, and although powerful and terrifying, the monster can show tenderness and humour too.

Conor is surprised that the monster proposes to tell him three stories, and then requires Conor to tell him his own story. The tales which the Monster recounts reveal the complexities of human motivation and justice, while Conor begins to realise that life may be tangled and far from simple. As he struggles with his everyday life ? family relationships, school with the bullying gang and his loyal friend Lily ? Conor finds that he can behave in a surprisingly monstrous manner. Finally, as he is forced to tell the Monster his own tale, his own truth, Conor can face his fears and the inevitable conclusion in peace.

This unique book is enthralling, and the poignant plot is handled without mawkish sentimentality. The striking monochrome illustrations by Jim Kay enhance the experience of reading and the publishers are to be commended for the physical presentation of the hardback edition.

Conor's story touches the emotions and has remained with me long after I finished reading. I would have no hesitation in recommending the book to any thoughtful reader, especially one facing grief or loss

Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/a-monster-calls>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/190>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/wendy-roberts>