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# A Monster Calls



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the dark of night, when the house is still, what fears creep into your heart? For Conor O'Malley, his nightmares take the shape of a very old and very dangerous monster who visits him every night at seven minutes past midnight. He's half-convinced that these must be dreams of his fevered mind.

But how can they be, when the visits are so vivid and when he finds physical evidence of the monster's existence the next day? Conor's nightmares begin shortly after his mother starts her treatments for cancer. He's also dealing with a father who lives far away and is engrossed with his new family, a brisk and determined grandma who doesn't understand him, and schoolmates who don't seem to see him anymore. As readers learn more and more about Conor's story and the terrible monster who comes to visit, it is impossible not to feel worry and fear and sadness for this boy, whose must shoulder problems that have toppled many adults before him. But even in his anger and pain, Conor's defiant spirit shows flashes of dry humor and painful hopefulness that are difficult to witness, but make him impossibly endearing. *A Monster Calls* is a children's book, but it's a children's book in the way that Roald Dahl or Shel Silverstein wrote children's books--that is, the surface stories are certainly well-written and compelling, but underneath that are the themes of confusion and loneliness and sadness that elevate them to timeless works of literature. And while *A Monster Calls* chooses to confront its demons more literally than some other books may, it does so with such fierce intelligence and ease that it never feels didactic or forced. This an incredible book about the enormous burdens of responsibility and grief and loss.

Five stars: This is a haunting, heartbreaking book that will grab onto your heart strings. *A Monster Calls* is one of those books that has the ability to break your heart and touch your soul. On the surface it is supposedly a children's book; one where a monster comes roaring to a window one night. A great, old, wild terrible monster but he is not the horrible nightmare Conor O'Malley has been expecting; for you see he has been haunted repeatedly in his nightmares by something far worse. This horror of his dreams is something so cruel and terrifying he dares not acknowledge it. The monster at his window, who is strangely constructed from the ancient yew tree in the graveyard, imparts three different tales to Conor; three tales of truths. The monster warns that when the last tale has been told Conor must tell his own tale. He must confess his great truth, his greatest fear, or be eaten but he cannot reveal to anyone that which is devouring his soul or can he? Besides the monster is just a dream after all but why is his room mysteriously covered with needles and berries from a yew tree? Thus, the journey begins. The story opens with thirteen year old Conor bearing the crushing toll of his mother's cancer. He slowly watches as the disease ravishes her body, steals her vitality and hair and sucks away her life. Each day he shoulders more and more of a burden too heavy for a boy his age. At school he has become the invisible boy. Everyone is afraid to speak to him, for he is the boy whose mother has cancer. Day in and day out he endures the whispers and looks of pity, surrounded by people, who inadvertently ignore him because they fear saying the

"wrong" thing. Conor is screaming inside for anyone to recognize him, even if it means drawing the attention of a bully.

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