

Key Words

- **Protagonist:** the leading character or one of the major characters in a play
- **Antagonist:** a person who actively opposes or is hostile to someone or something; an adversary.
- **Symbolism:** the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities.
- **Allegory:** a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral (**moral: a shared idea of right or wrong**) or political one.
- **Foreshadowing:** be a warning or indication of (a future event).

Key Skills

- Understand and analyse the symbolism in the novel
- Write analytically about how the author the uses language to portray Conor’s emotions, thoughts, and feelings throughout the novel.
- Empathetic and sensitive in-depth discussion about loss and bereavement.
- Descriptive and creative writing.

Key Concepts

- **Grief:** intense sorrow, especially caused by someone's death.
- **Denial:** A refusal or unwillingness to accept reality.
- **Anger:** A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.
- **Bargaining:** Negotiation with oneself or the world around them. The torturing of oneself with “what ifs” “If I do this, I could save them.”
- **Depression:** Persistent feeling of sadness and loss
- **Acceptance:** Making peace with the fact that reality cannot be changed.

Essential information:

- Patrick Ness took on the challenge of writing a book based on the idea of another author, **Siobhan Dowd**, whose premature death prevented her from writing it herself.
- Ness alludes to mythical monsters: **Herne the Hunter, The Green Man, The Bogeyman, The Grim Reaper and The Minotaur.**
- Overview: Conor is visited by a monster who tells him a series of tales to help him come to terms with his mum’s illness

Characters:

1. **Conor:** Protagonist, a schoolboy who is struggling to come to terms with losing his mum to terminal cancer and his feelings surrounding it.
2. **Conor’s Mum:** a character that is also struggling to accept her own diagnosis and this manifests in her attempts to find a cure for her illness.
3. **Conor’s Dad:** Lives in America, hardly present in Conor’s life.
4. **Grandma:** has a difficult relationship with Conor, due to their different coping mechanisms in relation to grief.
5. **Lily:** Conor’s old best friend, however they had a falling out and are no longer as close as they once were.
6. **Harry:** Conor’s school bully.
7. **Miss Kwan:** Headmistress of Conor’s school.

Key quotes:

- “You know that your truth, the one you hide, Conor O’Malley, is the thing you are most afraid of.”
- “The monster smiled. It was a ghastly sight. If I must force my way in, it said, I will do so happily.”
- “There is not always a good guy. Nor is there always a bad one. Most people are somewhere in between.”
- “Sometimes, people need to lie to themselves most of all”
- “Conor O’Malley who wants to be punished.”
- “Humans are complicated beasts.”
- “Stories are the wildest things of all, the monster rumbled. Stories chase and bite and hunt.”