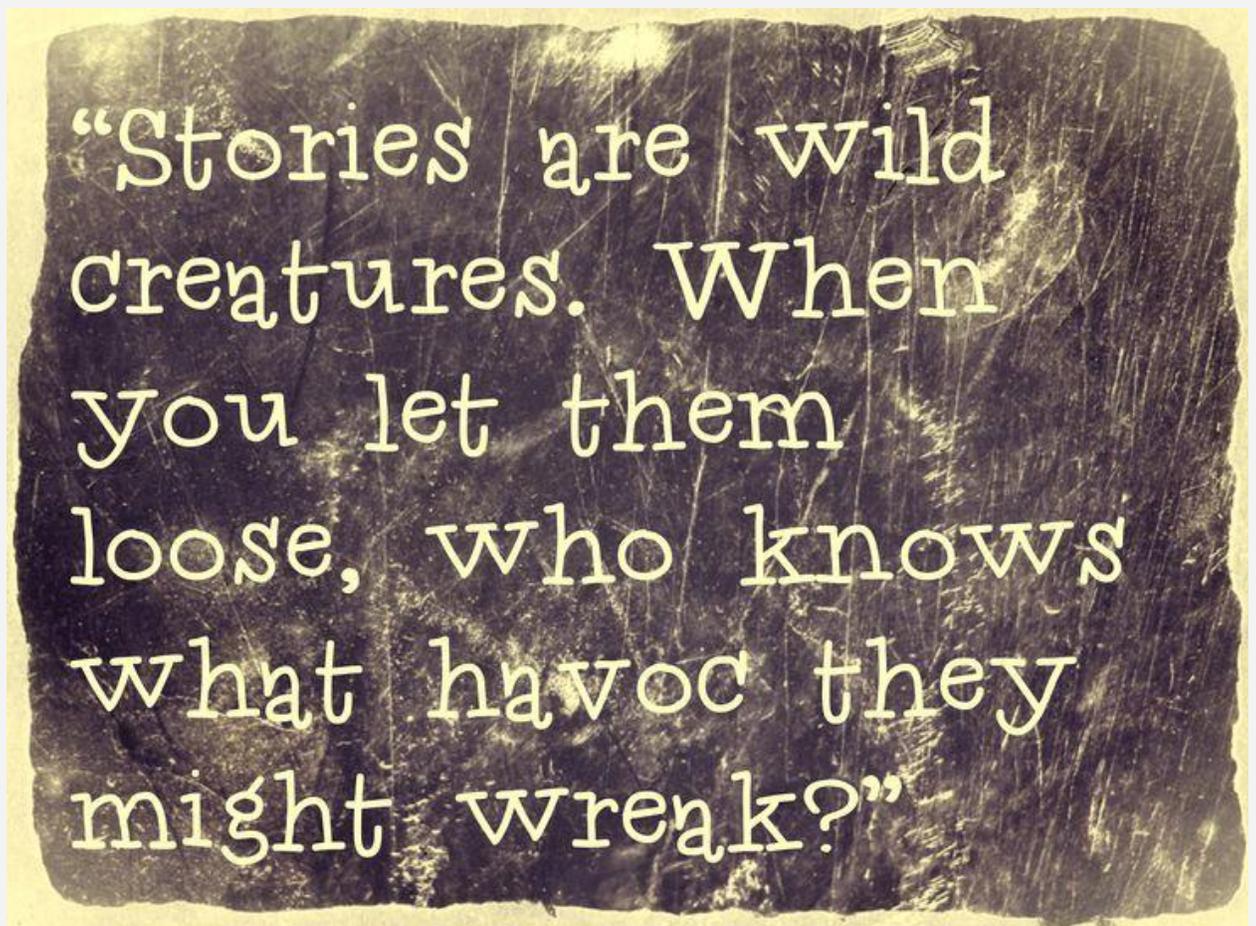




## Run With It.

Working with *A Monster Calls* in class.





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## **Verantwoording:**

*A Monster Calls* is such a powerful and provocative story, dealing with the internal conflicts of young Conor, whose mother is going to die of cancer. The content and the unique angle make it a compelling story, yet a difficult book to deal with in a group setting. Perhaps you are looking for a way to deal with the subject in class, perhaps you want to deal with a book that's not all unicorns and rainbows. In any case, the book provides a plethora of options to deal with stories and storytelling. Our assignments are geared towards linking the subject matter of the book to the pupils personal world, through assignments that leave a lot of room for interpretation.

There are dozens of ways to tell a story. Patrick Ness is very outspoken about the way he wants to write, and what he writes; the book also reinforces that writing is not the only way of telling a truth. Therefore we have tried to focus on oral ways of sharing (every session has suggestions for group discussions) and other ways of responding to the story they are reading, such as building a soundtrack, which allows for a more auditive response. Also the MMM's are to be accepted by the teacher in as many shapes or forms as possible, to stay with one of the themes of the book.

## **Objectives:**

We hope to achieve that students take a step in the direction of appreciating stories on a different level, and opening up story telling in 2 ways:

- 1) as a means of sharing ("telling a story")
- 2) opening up the definition of a story: ways of telling a story can be very personal and diverse ("this is a means to tell my story")

## **Why a portfolio?**



Due to the personal character of the assignments, we feel a portfolio might be the safest feeling option to the student. They can 'run with it' as they see fit, without having to feel exposed as might be the case with material that is supposed to be shown or presented in class.

### **Circle Time:**

As the book might evoke some intense issues or feelings, it might be wise to dedicate some time to topics such as loss and grief. If you want to address loss or other difficult issues in class, that might (have) come up because of *A Monster Calls*, Circle Time seems an interesting option. It is a way to build group safety and: it's story-based. Circle Time is based on voluntary responses, respect, and sharing, which makes it an option worth your while to explore for use in a group where "loss" is a particularly current topic. An outline of the method for grief and loss is enclosed.



## Compiling a Portfolio

We suggest using a portfolio as a way of monitoring and collecting reading assignments, in order to both address metacognitive skills and have pupils respond as openly as they dare, because they do not have to present or speak up about personal issues

- MMM's - My Most Memorable Moments (5 possible, 4 obligatory). Every session send in a representation of what you thought was the most impressive/scary/touching/funny/emotional/distasteful/disappointing/interesting part of the assigned pages. Do this before reading class! You can choose any form you like: a voice message, a written response ( max. 100 words) a drawing, a collage. Add page numbers, and make sure that with the non-verbal responses you add a short note why.
- A Sound Track: build a soundtrack of five or six songs as a soundtrack to the film we pretend will be made according to your views. The songs have to relate to particular parts. You will have to identify to which part the song belongs.
- A Film Poster or a Link to a self directed Trailer. (group work)
- Life Writing - Mrs. Kwam wants the group to write about big events in their lives. The Monster has a different opinion. He says you write you life with deeds, not words. Show what you think are crucial things you did (3) and will do (2) that define you.

## Grading:

### General grading



- MMM's (i.e, class participation) - 1 for bad, 2 for sufficient, 3 for good  
4x3 = 12 pts
- Life Writing, the Sound Track, and the Poster or Trailer each are graded on a schale of 1-10, and multiplied by 2.6
- Bonuspoints (8) for lay out.

**Build - up of the 1-10 grade for the assignments:**

Explanation: 1-5 points

Creativity: 3 points

Effort: 2 points.



## Scoresheet Portfolio

Student's Name: - \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Lay out	1 -2-3-4-5-6-7-8
MMM 1	1 - 2 - 3
MMM 2	1 -2 - 3
MMM 3	1 - 2 - 3
MMM 4	1 - 2 - 3
The Original Soundtrack (explanation)	1-2-3-4-5
The Original Soundtrack (Effort)	1-2
The Original Soundtrack (Creativity)	1-2-3
Life Writing (explanation)	1-2-3-4-5
Life Writing (Effort)	1-2
Life Writing (Creativity)	1-2-3
The Poster / The Trailer (explanation)	1-2-3-4-5
The Poster / The Trailer (Effort)	1-2
The Poster / The Trailer (Creativity)	1-2-3
<b>Total</b>	
Total x 2.6 =	





## Session 1 - Meet the Monster

### Teacher Activities:

- share collected monsters (2 mins)
- group talk: Nightmares (5 mins)
- Show trailer (hyperlink in text) (2 mins)
- Explore the exterior of the book, explore illustrations (10 mins)
- Address Cancer (as long as it takes)
- Explain reading schedule and assessment (portfolio) (10 mins)
- Address privacy issues when uploading film (5 mins)
- Kick-off the reading experience by reading to the class (5 mins)

### Materials needed:

- Beamer
- *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness
- Worksheets: Planning Your Reading
- Worksheet: Judge a Book by its Cover

Before this session, ask students to send you their favourite monsters, and compile them in a visual. When class starts, you might want to have these up on the board already to spike interest. This session is intended to start reading, introduce the portfolio concept, and most important of all: introduce the book!

First, talk in class about nightmares in general, and recurring dreams. What kind of dreams do people have? What are recurring symbols? Does anybody ever have lucid dreams?

When do you have nightmares?

Now: introduce the book! Show them the trailer to the book!



Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8-psq00N-Y>

Hand out the books, and explore the cover as a class activity.

What does the title mean?

What stands out on the cover?

What's on the blurb?

What kind of book is it?

In earlier editions, the prizewinning illustrations and the award that the book received are of course not on the cover. Find a new edition or tell the class and explore the drawings: Do they like the drawings, do they notice particular features? Does anybody notice there are no faces in the drawings except for the monster? **Remember to ask them again after having finished the story.**

On the blurb, reference is made to Conor's 'baldy Mum'. This might be the right time to raise the awareness about the book being about cancer. If needed or wanted, open the floor up for anyone who wants to say something about cancer in their personal lives.

Another topic that might come up is how to respond to people in mourning or going through a period involving a loved one battling cancer. This \*could\* potentially be a good topic to bring up for a group discussion whenever there is the time for it.

When discussing the assessment of the project, touch upon cybersafety and privacy issues! DO NOT allow students to upload the trailer in an open channel or publicly. Ask them to use wetransfer.com or a private channel on youtube. Preferably, have students hand in trailers on DVD.

Read out the first pages of the book to the group.





## Session 2 - Meet Patrick Ness -pages 45-66:

### Teacher Activities:

- Discuss MMM's (make sure you have read them before class and see what the general opinion is) - 15 minutes
- Interview assignment: students think up 3 questions for Patrick Ness in pairs.
- Read Interview Patrick Ness as preparation for class: (depending on the level of your group, consider working with the written interview, rather than the video if time allows)
- Show : <http://youtu.be/TeT1ga5ZqFI?t=2m13s> about Patrick Ness' inspiration, which is music (amongst others) and his running-5 minutes.
- (Re)- introduce the soundtrack assignment -5
- Organize silent reading: 10 minutes

### Materials:

<http://youtu.be/TeT1ga5ZqFI?t=2m13s>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9331493/A-Monster-Calls-Patrick-Ness-and-Jim-Kay-talk-about-their-Carnegie-and-Greenaway-wins.html>

### Questions for Patrick Ness:

Think up questions for PAtrick Ness. Most interviews are pretty boring if you search youtube. Think of interesting questions that would get him talking. Max 3. Work in pairs. Either consider sending them to Patrick Ness in an e-mail or as a video. Look into the option of a skype-date with Patrick Ness.





## **Session 3 - Alone - pages 67-108:**

### **Teacher Activities:**

- Discuss MMM's (make sure you have read them before class and see what the general opinion is) - 15 minutes
- Introduce 'Spaceman' as an assignment. Make sure to have visual support for the kids that have a hard time imagining (e.g., posters, movieclips, comics)

### **Materials:**

Outline spaceman assignment on paper, as in worksheet supplement



## Session 4: Destruction - pages 108 -142

### Teacher Activities:

- Discuss MMM's (make sure you have read them before class and see what the general opinion is) - 15 minutes
- Display the quote from Patrick Ness' interview about the key scene he had in mind before writing *A Monster Calls*.
- Dispense Worksheet for Reading Circles
- Make groups: 1 group focuses on Conor, 1 group focuses on Conor's grandmother, 1 group focuses on the Tale and its relation to Conor, 1 group focuses on the relation of the tale to the previous tales.

### Materials:

- Quote: 'Ness's stories always begin when he has several powerful images in his head. "I got a visual of Conor coming out of a destructive story and turning round to discover he has destroyed the sitting room. That was the first real image I had, and something was right, and it went from there."'
- Clues: in case a group struggles, have questions ready to get them started.

Clue-cards:

What was going on with Conor / Grandma / in the tales in the pages you read?

Why does Conor / Grandma / The Monster destroy the house?

What does Conor / Grandma think about Dad? Why?

The tales are different from normal fairytales: how?





## **Session 5: I No Longer See You - pages: 142-172**

In this part of the book, Harry tries a third method of bullying: ignoring Conor. Bullying is common to happen to young people going through a period of grief. The students have also read about Mrs Marl handing back life writing assignments. This is the time to reintroduce the life writing assignment.

### **Teacher Activities:**

- Discuss MMM's (make sure you have read them before class and see what the general opinion is) - 15 minutes
- Ask what three methods of bullying Harry employed so far (physical violence, verbal abuse, and ignoring).
- Discuss why Mrs Kwan is afraid of Harry becoming Prime Minister
- Be sure to discuss what would be
- Consider using Circle Time if needed/available
- Spread Choose Kind posters around class and discuss

### **Materials:**

- Choose Kind Posters (Wonder, R.J. Palacio)



## **Session 6: Life Writing - pages 174-200**

### **Teacher Activities:**

- Discuss MMM's (make sure you have read them before class and see what the general opinion is) - 5 minutes
- Read the final part to *A Monster Calls* in class. 201-205 (
- Coordinate sharing Life Writing during the session
- Instruct students to visit all tables, and to always be positive and encouraging.
- Consider using a U-set up for the tables.

### **Materials:**

Blanc cards to receive compliments or questions on per pupil.





## **Worksheets**



## Compiling a Portfolio

You will build a portfolio consisting of:

- MMM's - My Most Memorable Moments (5 possible, 4 obligatory). Every session you have to send in a representation of what you thought was the most impressive/scary/touching/funny/emotional/distasteful/disappointing/interesting part of the assigned pages. Do this before reading class! You can choose any form you like: a voice message, a written response ( max. 100 words) a drawing, a collage. Add page numbers, and make sure that with the non-written responses you add a short note why.
- A Sound Track: build a soundtrack of five or six songs as a soundtrack to the film we pretend will be made according to your views. The songs have to relate to particular parts. You will have to identify to which part the song belongs. You can hand this in as a playlist, as a cd, as a series of mp3's, or as a youtube playlist.
- A Film Poster **or** a Link to a self directed Trailer. (group work)
- Life Writing - Mrs. Kwam wants the group to write about big events in their lives. The Monster has a different opinion. He says you write you life with deeds, not words. Show what you think are crucial things you did (3) and will do (2) that define you. Of course, there are many ways to tell a story, such as photography, trophies, medals, art, poetry, spoken word, written stories, drawings, or songs (you cannot do a cover or send in a mp3). Choose a form you like and create something original\*.

## Planning your project:

This is maybe the first time you have to deal with assigned reading. Think carefully about how and where you are going to plan this. Find a spot where you don't get a lot of distraction, and set a feasible (haalbaar) number of pages. It might also be worth taking small notes while reading to make the portfolio assignments easier (especially the Soundtrack and the trailer).



**Question:** How long will you need to finish the poster or trailer? Take into account that these are group assignments!! Start planning in week 1!

### **Checklist - What Should Be in My Portfolio?**

- MMM week 2
- MMM week 3
- MMM week 4
- MMM week 5
- MMM week 6
- 5-6 songs for Soundtrack
- Folder (for portfolio)
- Film poster (A4 or A3) OR Trailer (upload hyperlink on CLOSED channel on Youtube)
- Life Writing: insert document or pics of 3d items.
- Insanely cool cover for your portfolio



### What Do I Read When?

Pages	Finished By (date)	pages a day:



## **Judge a Book by Its Cover - in pairs**

1. Look at your copy of *A Monster Calls*, what is the first thing that you notice?
2. What do the colours of the cover make you think about?
3. What about the illustrations? describe them to your neighbour, and discuss what the cover says about the book.
4. Now, read the blurb: were you right?
5. What are your expectations now that you've read the blurb?
6. Check out the drawings in the book, do you notice anything special?



## **A Spaceman Story**

Write a story about a space man or woman trapped on earth. He or she has no real way of getting back home and it is very hard to contact home. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

### **Warm-up Questions:**

- ★ You can write as the spaceman or woman if you want to.
- ★ If you find it hard to start, start with "Once upon a time.."
- ★ What does the space man or woman want?
- ★ How does the spaceman or woman feel?
- ★ Has he or she come alone or with a group?
- ★ How do they feel different from people on earth?
- ★ How do they communicate to the people on earth?
- ★ What do they do to try and survive on earth?
- ★ How can they get what they need?
- ★ Does this story have an ending? If so, what is it? Happy or sad?



## **Worksheet: Destruction! Reading Circles**

### **Group Conor**

What was going on with Conor / Grandma / in the tales in the pages you read?

Why does Conor destroy the house?

How does Conor feel about Dad? Why?

### **Group Grandmother**

What was going on with Conor / Grandma / in the tales in the pages you read?

When Grandma sees what Conor did to her living room, she doesn't get mad but pulls down the cupboard. What do you think about that? Why does she do it?

How does Grandma feel about Dad? Why?

### **Group Monster / Tales:**

The tales are different from normal fairytales: how? What do you like / not like?

What was going on in the tales in the pages you read?

Compare the tales: do you see any similarities?





## **Circle Time For Loss, a supplement in Dutch:**

[http://www.congres-content.nl/documenten/2012-03-congres-llb-impressie/  
artikel-circle-time-verlies-frits-roelofs.pdf](http://www.congres-content.nl/documenten/2012-03-congres-llb-impressie/artikel-circle-time-verlies-frits-roelofs.pdf)