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World Book Day 2017: A Monster Calls

“The monster showed up after midnight. As they do.”

'A Monster Calls' is a modern fairytale which follows 13 year old Conor O'Malley as he struggles to cope with his mother's terminal cancer diagnosis as well as school bullies, his estranged father and his overbearing grandmother. Throughout the story, after waking from the same terrible nightmare, Conor is repeatedly visited by an arborescent monster in the middle of the night.

The monster wants to tell him stories.

The monster also wants something from Conor – to reveal the truth.

Author Siobhan Dowd conceived the novel during her own terminal illness and sadly died before she could write it - so her editor arranged for acclaimed children's author, Patrick Ness, to write the novel. Despite being written for a slightly younger audience, this book can be read by any age group as it carefully tackles the raw emotions surrounding the illness and death of a loved one - from grief and loneliness to anger and frustration.

Each story that the monster tells has an underlying message. Conor struggles throughout the book to understand the meaning of the stories - which often end in an unjust way. However, the monster tells him that: "There is not always a good guy. Nor is there always a bad one. Most people are somewhere in between". The book beautifully illustrates how nothing is ever black and white, and stories don't always have happy endings.

This book is a heart-wrenching masterpiece that is raw, emotional and cathartic – anyone who has ever lost or is losing a loved one should read this. It is not a happy book, but it is an important one.

More children's books about bereavement that we recommend are:

'Saying Goodbye to Hare' by Carol Lee and Donna Bell

'Charlotte's Web' by E.B. White

'My Father's Arms Are a Boat' by Stein Erik Lunde and Oyvind Torseter

'Skellig' by David Almond

If you would like to find out more about our children's services, please visit our website: <https://ellenor.org/childrens-hospice-care>

You can find out more about World Book Day here: <http://www.worldbookday.com/>

We are **ellenor**, a charity funded by the generosity of our local community, offering the best care and support to families facing terminal illness in Kent. We are the **only** charity in the county that provides hospice care for people of all ages – babies, children and adults - and their families. This includes pain and symptom relief, end of life care, respite, bereavement support and emotional and spiritual care.

Our Children's Hospice Care, formerly known as chYps, is provided in the comfort of the family home and spans across North and West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Adults living in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley, receive care in their place of choice, including their own homes, at our Hospice in Gravesend and in local care homes.

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