

First Impressions

Title of Scheme: <i>A Monster Calls</i>	WEEK 1
Resources required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPT 1 <i>Monsters: First Impressions</i>. • Worksheet 1 <i>The Monster</i>. 	

LESSON 1

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this lesson are to:

- understand the role of monsters in stories generally, and particularly in *A Monster Calls*.
- understand that vivid descriptions of characters can be created through verb choices, including an understanding that present participles can post-modify nouns to add description.

Grammar focus

Lexical verbs: these are verbs which describe actions or states.

Present participles: these are formed by adding -ing to the verb stem.

Introduction

Teacher: bring in a copy of a young children's book which involves a monster (e.g. *The Gruffalo*; *Where the Wild Things Are*) and invite students to recall other stories with monsters in them. Collate names on the board (e.g. the BFG; the Iron Man; the Minotaur; Gollum; Smaug; Frankenstein's monster).

Pairs/groups: sort the monsters into good or bad monsters.

Whole class: invite a discussion as to why so many stories have monsters in them, and the roles monsters can play in stories. Encourage recollection of any of their own childhood imaginary monsters, such as monsters under the bed, and discuss the fine line between the real and the imagined.

Development

Teacher: invite students to close their eyes while the first description of the monster in *A Monster Calls* is read aloud. This will help them to visualise the monster. Discuss what their first impressions of the monster were - did they think he was good or bad?

Pairs/groups: using PPT1.2 and Worksheet 1 *The Monster*, underline all the verbs in the description of the monster.

Teacher: take answers and show PPT 1.3 with all the verbs highlighted in colour. Discuss the verb choices and draw out how all the verbs about the monster represent movement, helping the reader to visualise the tree shaping into the monster. Show PPT 1.4 and invite students to speculate on the impact of the single verb 'watched' describing Conor, compared with the large number of verbs describing the monster. Draw out Conor's passive role against the monster's active role.

Pairs/groups: using PPT 1.5, look at each of the present participles (verbs) highlighted in blue and decide which noun they are describing.

Teacher: show PPT 1.6 with the nouns highlighted in red. Draw out that the present participles create a sense of immediacy, that this is happening before our very eyes, and that the present participles all come after a noun, adding more detail and description.

Pairs/groups: look at the image of the monster on PPT 1.7. What impression does this create of the 'tree' monster? What does the image convey that the words do not? What do the words convey that the image does not?

Individual: we never really see the 'real' monster of Conor's nightmare but we are told he is 'formed of cloud and ash and dark flames, but with real muscle, real strength, real red eyes that glared back at him and flashing teeth that would eat his mother alive'. Write a short description of this monster, thinking about making verb choices which describe its actions, whilst also using present participles to add extra vivid description to some of the nouns. As you do this, think about what impression of the monster you want to create for your reader. Showing PPT 1.8 may be helpful here.

Conclusion

Whole class: ask for volunteers to read aloud their descriptions of Conor's nightmare monster, inviting writers to explain the verb choices they have made and the impression they wanted to create.

Plenary discussion: what does the nightmare monster represent in the story (e.g. death; illness; Conor's worst fear)? What will happen to the nightmare monster after the end of the story? What are our own monsters? Why might Patrick Ness have chosen to tell the story using monsters?

Homework/ActiveLearn

Support

- Use targeted questioning to ensure understanding of the differences between the 'tree' monster and the 'nightmare' monster.
- Use the underlining task as an opportunity to check basic understanding of the verb is secure.

Challenge

- Use targeted questioning to develop thinking about the symbolism of monsters and how they are often used to portray our deepest fears.
- Challenge students to see how the post-modifying present participles are creating long noun phrases.