



Photograph by Alan Peebles

Patrick Ness learning activities

Explore the books of Patrick Ness through varied cross-curricular activities

Age 12-18

CFE Levels Third, Fourth
and Senior Phrase

Resource created by
Scottish Book Trust

scottishbooktrust.com



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Book Trust**
inspiring readers and writers

Contents

About this resource	1
Subverting dystopia	2
<i>More Than This</i> activities	2
<i>Chaos Walking</i> series activities	3
<i>The Knife of Never Letting Go</i>	3
<i>The Ask and the Answer</i>	4
<i>Monsters of Men</i>	4
<i>Chaos Walking</i> shorts: <i>The New World</i>	5
<i>Chaos Walking</i> shorts: <i>The Wide, Wide Sea</i>	5
<i>Chaos Walking</i> shorts: <i>Snowscape</i>	5
<i>A Monster Calls</i> activities	6

About this resource

This resource has been produced to help you make the most of our online Authors Live event with Patrick Ness, but you can also use it at any point to engage pupils with many of Patrick's other books. Each section contains several cross-curricular activities linked to a specific book, with associated links and CfE experiences and outcomes.

Subverting dystopia

In his [Authors Live session](#), Patrick Ness suggests that YA novels featuring dystopian worlds often reflect many of the real anxieties that young people experience. However, he also says that he is a 'desperate optimist', looking for hope and exploring something different to the expected with his narratives.

Ask pupils to list some common anxieties that young people face. Can they think of a corresponding fictional dystopia that might reflect these anxieties? Choose one dystopian world and ask pupils to come up with some ideas that might take it in an unexpected direction.

More Than This activities

Empty world EXA 3-14a, EXA 4-14a

In *More Than This* the main character wakes up in an apparently empty world. How would you feel if you woke up to find you were the only person on earth? Divide pupils into groups and give each group three envelopes, one marked *Character*, one *Location* and one *The last thing you remember*. Each of these envelopes should contain a different description of a character, a strangely empty location and the last thing they remember before they woke up here. Ask pupils to discuss their scenario and share it with the group.

As an extension activity, you can ask pupils to then create and perform a piece of drama which includes all of the information they have been given.

Healthy relationships HWB 3-45a, HWB 4-45a, HWB 3-03a, HWB 4-03a

Among the many themes explored in *More Than This* is that of domestic abuse: Regine has experienced physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her stepfather.

Discuss what makes a good or bad relationship. Ask pupils to work in groups to make a list of positive and negative behaviour in a relationship. Pupils can then explore websites such as [The Mix](#) to research healthy and unhealthy relationships and compare the information they find to their lists.

Ask pupils to find three different places that someone could find help if they found themselves in a difficult relationship.

First and last lines LIT 3-17a, LIT 4-17a

In his Authors Live session Patrick Ness talks about the importance of the first and last lines of his books. Consider the first and last lines of *More Than This*. How much of the story is carried by these lines?

Ask pupils to discuss Patrick's choice of words, the tense, the suggestion of what is to come, the main characters introduction and how much of the story was actually contained within these lines.

As an extension activity, pupils could look at the first lines from a few books they haven't read yet. Ask them if they would read the book based on the first line? What do they think it will be about? What information does the first line give them?

Chaos Walking activities

The Knife of Never Letting Go

A noisy world LIT 3-02a, LIT 4-02a

Watch [this video](#) of Patrick Ness discussing his idea for the Chaos Walking series. He says that he feels the "world is a noisy place" due to mobile phones, networking sites and an increase in information sharing. Ask pupils to discuss whether this way of life puts particular pressure on young people, as he suggests?

Visualizing Noise EXA 3-03a, EXA 4-03a, EXA 4-18a

The book features illustrations of Noise. Ask pupils to try to create their own illustration of Noise by thinking about the pressures of their own lives and thoughts and words that might surround them. Illustrations could be made using words or letters cut out from newspapers and magazines, by painting, drawing or digital art, or by experimenting with various fonts and sizes.

As an extension activity you could ask pupils to create or find a soundtrack to accompany their illustration. What different styles in pieces of music (including timbre, tempo and lyrics) might reflect the idea of troubled Noise?.

Debating education LIT 3-02a, LIT 4-02a

At the start of the book, there is a theme of lack of education, which is evident through Todd's writing. Mayor Prentiss has burned all books and banned teaching because he thinks it "detrimental". Split pupils into two groups and ask one group to defend the Mayor's decision and one to argue against it.

The Ask and the Answer

Allies RME 3-09a, RME 4-09a, HWB 3-45a, HWB 4-45a

In *The Ask and the Answer*, Todd and Viola find themselves on opposite sides of the war and have to make difficult choices about who to trust and support. Look at the [causes of World War One](#) and ask pupils to discuss the idea of countries forming alliances to protect each other. Is it ethical to support another country's war?

What if you were asked to protect someone? Ask pupils to list the things they might do if they saw someone being bullied. How far would they be willing to go? Discuss how far is too far?

Extreme regimes SOC 3-06b, SOC 4-06b

Many of the rulings made by Mayor Prentiss about the citizens' way of life reflects that of the Taliban and Nazism. Ask pupils to research the rules made by extremist political or religious organisations and discuss the impact these rules have on citizens. At what point do societal rules become too restrictive?

Discrimination LIT 3-02a, LIT 4-02a

There are many negative attitudes towards Spackle people throughout *Chaos Walking*. During one exchange, Davy criticises Prentisstown citizens for treating Spackle people "like they're effing members of the family." Todd replies that "maybe they are". Ask pupils to discuss how society treats those who are different.

Monsters of Men

Impartial reporting LIT 3-18a, LIT 4-18a, LIT 3-29a, LIT 4-29a

Ask pupils to work in groups to write and perform an **impartial** television/radio news broadcast reporting on the unfolding war which takes place during *Monsters of Men*. How do they think this broadcast would differ if it was made by each faction?

Literary mapping LIT 3-26a, LIT 4-26a

At the start of the book we are shown a map of locations. Does this help pupils' understanding of the book? Or does it hinder their imagination? Ask pupils to create a map of locations featured in a text they are studying in class. Make a wall display featuring their maps.

Mysterious character ENG 3-31a, ENG 4-31a

The identity of The Sky is not revealed until near the end of the book. Ask pupils to produce a piece of creative writing featuring a mysterious character.

Chaos Walking shorts: The New World

Our world SCN 4-06a

The opening paragraphs of *The New World* describe Viola's view of Earth from space. Ask pupils to research images of Earth from space and then create their own image. This may be a 3D model, a computer-generated image or a drawing.

Letter to an alien LIT 3-28a, LIT 4-28a

Viola and her parents have spent their whole lives on a spaceship: "You've never lived on a planet." Ask pupils to write a letter to an alien from space explaining to them what life is like on earth – get them to think about the everyday technologies we use, what we do in day-to-day life.

Chaos Walking shorts: The Wide, Wide Sea

Fleeing the war SOC 3-03a

Many characters in *The Wide, Wide Sea* are leaving the only life they know and fleeing to other unknown parts of the world to escape the war. Explain to pupils that many people today are still forced to leave their home countries for that same reason. Ask pupils to map the routes of Asylum Seekers today and in the past.

A good leader? RME 4-09b

"Some leaders have to do hideous things" – Ask pupils to discuss if they think Mistress Coyle is a good leader based on her actions.

Chaos Walking shorts: Snowscape

Monster in the snow LIT 3-26a, LIT 4-26a

In *Snowscape* the group of explorers are threatened by a mysterious creature in the snow. They soon discover that this creature is not what it first appears to be. Ask pupils to research Cryptozoology: the study of creatures that are rumoured to exist, and then pick one such creature and write a story from its perspective.

Todd wakes ENG 3-27a, ENG 4-27a

The final sentence of *Snowscape* answers the question about Todd's fate. Ask pupils to write a diary entry from Todd's perspective when he wakes up. How would he be feeling when reflecting on his experiences?

***A Monster Calls* activities**

A double-edged sword LIT 3-07a, LIT 4-07a

Listen to [Patrick's interview](#) for the Guardian Children's Podcast: The interviewer quotes a line from *A Monster Calls*: "You're only young once, they say, but doesn't it go on for a long time? More years than you can bear." Patrick responds that he thinks "youth is a double-edged sword" – ask pupils to discuss whether or not they agree with this and why.

Exploring loss ENG 3-30a, ENG 4-30a

In the same interview, Patrick explains that the main theme of *A Monster Calls* is the fear of loss. Ask pupils to consider the things in their life that they would fear losing and write either a personal piece or a creative piece about fearing loss.

Create a scene EXA 3-02a, EXA 4-02a

Ask pupils to recreate a scene from *A Monster Calls* using any medium they like, e.g. Lego, puppets, clay models or drawings. This could be a still frame depicting a particular scene or, if they have access to apps such as iMotion or Stop Motion Studio, they could try creating a short animation.