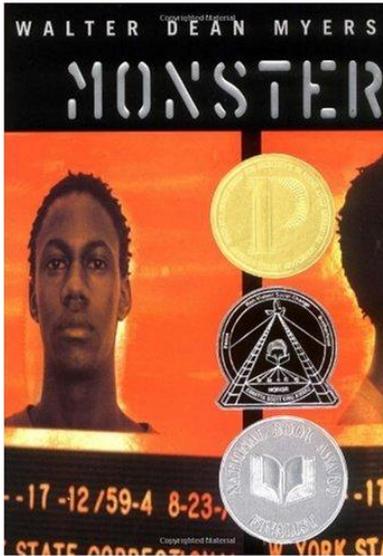


Monster Reading Guide



Questions and Ideas for Consideration

Guilt or Innocence: Did you believe Steve was guilty or innocent as you read the story? How/when did your opinion change? What details made it do so?

Screenplay: Why would Walter Dean Myers choose to write the story as a screenplay? How does it affect the narrative or change the reader's perspective of Steve? How do the journal entries and use of font/format contribute?

Award Winner: Walter Dean Myers was the winner of the first-ever Printz Award, the first recipient of the Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement, and has won countless other honors. What do you think makes him such a beloved and renowned writer of young adult fiction?

Race: Steve claims during the trial that race doesn't have anything to do with the situation. Do you agree? How does race factor into the messages of the story?

Judicial System: What commentary on the judicial system and teens does this text make? How does it portray prison and speak to issues of justice and truth?

Monster: Explore who the text posits as the true "monsters" of our society.

Daybook Possibilities

- Explore the effect of the screenplay by transferring a scene from a book we've read this semester (or another novel you enjoy) into this format. How does this change the story?
- Do some research into teens in the prison and judicial system. What perception does the media portray of this concept? Consider pasting some images that reflect this into your daybook.
- What contemporary news stories or events relate to *Monster's* depiction of a teen on trial for murder? How does this story affect your perception of these modern day events?
- *Monster* has won several awards; research the Printz Award, the Coretta Scott King award, and National Book Award, and compare this text to other winners and nominees.
- Take a look at some of Walter Dean Myers's other books and/or research his website at <http://walterdeanmyers.net/>. What impact has Myers had on young adult literature, and why do many consider him an important and beloved writer?
- Read some of the extras available in some editions of the text (Harper Teen 1999). How does learning about Myers and reading about his perception of the book affect your understanding of the story?

Suggested Critical Reading

"'What did she see?': The White Gaze and Postmodern Triple Consciousness in Walter Dean Myers's *Monster*" by Tim Engles and Fern Kory

"The Reader in the Closet: Literacy and Masculinity in Walter Dean Myers's *Bad Boy: A Memoir*" by Don Latham

"On Being a Black Writer in America" by Virginia Hamilton and "Earning Our Children's Trust" by Walter Dean Myers (*Lion and the Unicorn* issue 1986)

Background and Context

Monster won the Michael L. Printz Award in 2000, and it is a Coretta Scott King Award Honor book nominated for the 1999 National Book Award for Young People's Literature. Using a combination of journal entries and screenplay, the text details the story of Steve Harmon, on trial for felony murder and facing the prospect of spending his youth in prison as a result of his involvement in a drugstore robbery that left the shop owner dead. Highly acclaimed, *Monster* is one of the most beloved books by Walter Dean Myers, who died in July 2014.