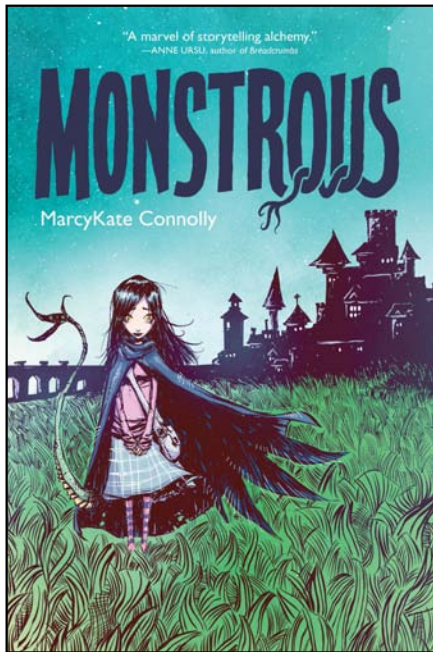


MONSTROUS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MarcyKate Connolly



ABOUT THE BOOK

In this spellbinding original fairy tale, the city of Bryre suffers under the magic of an evil wizard. Because of his curse, girls sicken and disappear without a trace, and all live in fear. No one is allowed outside after dark. But night is when Kymera secretly enters the city, with a cloak to disguise her wings, the bolts in her neck, and her spiky tail. Her mission is to rescue the girls of Bryre. Despite Kym's caution, a boy named Ren sees and befriends her . . . but what he knows will change her world forever.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MarcyKate Connolly is a writer, composer, and arts administrator living in New England with her husband and pugs. She's a coffee addict, voracious reader, and recurring commuter. You can visit her online at www.marcykate.com.



Photo by Cheryl Colombo Photography

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For all questions, students should cite specific examples and details from the text in their answers. (RL 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1)

1. Physically, Kymera is very much a monster. How is she different from other monsters you've read about (such as werewolves, vampires, or Frankenstein's monster), and how is she similar? *(RL 4.3, 5.3)*
2. *Monstrous* includes themes such as good versus evil, selflessness, the importance of family, and learning to accept oneself. What other themes can you identify? Pick one and explain how the author conveys it in the text and develops it over the course of the novel. Please cite specific examples and details. *(RL 4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2)*
3. Which themes from *Monstrous* discussed in the previous question often appear in other fairy tales or fantasy novels? Please specify which ones and give examples of the similarities. How does *Monstrous* draw on these themes and make them new? *(RL 4.9, 5.9)*
4. Father and Kymera are characters who share similar goals. Compare and contrast the ways they go about achieving these goals. What does that reveal about their characters? *(RL 5.3)*
5. How does the book's structure impact the flow and progression of the story? Why do you think the author chose "days" instead of chapters for this particular story? *(RL 3.5, 5.5, 6.5, 7.5)*
6. The story begins right after Kymera has been reborn in her new monstrous form. She must relearn many things about the world around her. How is her character at the end of the book different from the beginning? Which events lead to these changes? Please cite specific examples and details from the text. *(RL 3.3, 4.3, 6.3, 6.6)*
7. In her new life as a monster, Kymera has only fleeting, fragmented memories of the girl she calls the "once-me." How does this memory loss affect her character? *(RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.6)*
8. What are Kymera's beliefs at the beginning of the book? How does she struggle with her beliefs throughout the story? *(RL 3.3, 3.5, 4.3, 5.6, 6.3, 6.6, 7.3)*
9. Kymera has several goals in the story, but one consistent desire is to find a place where she belongs, even though she is very different from everyone she meets. What point do you think the author is making about outward appearances and belonging? *(RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.2, 6.2)*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE . . .

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

10. Father warns Kymera that she must pretend to be human and hide her animal parts from the city folk. When they finally see her in daylight on Day Fifty-Four, they fear her and want to kill her. How does their attitude toward her transform by the end of the story, and what do you believe causes that transformation? Cite specific details from the text that support your answer. (RL 4.3, 5.2, 6.2, 6.3, 7.2)
11. On Day Fifty-Seven, Kymera makes a shocking discovery about Father. What clues can you find in the text that hint at the truth before that scene occurs? Why do you think Kymera couldn't see the truth before? Cite specific examples from the text in your answers. (RL 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1)
12. Kymera is an unreliable narrator for the first half of the book. How does her point of view influence the way she describes events and sets events in motion? (RL 5.6, 6.3, 6.6)
13. How might the plot change if Kymera was aware of Father's true nature earlier on? (RL 5.6, 6.6)
14. Kymera meets several supporting characters on her journey, such as Ren, Greta, and Batu the dragon. Choose one character and explain how he or she influences Kymera and the story's events. (RL 3.3, 4.3, 6.3, 7.3)
15. Which supporting character do you believe plays the most important role? Use specific examples from the text to support your opinion. (RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.6)
16. Kymera experiences internal conflict between her animal instincts (her nature) and the upbringing from her previous life (how she was nurtured) that lingers in her subconscious mind. Which side, nature or nurture, do you think prevails in the end? How is that shown in the text? (RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.2, 6.3, 7.3)

WRITING ACTIVITIES

ELA Common Core Literacy Standards W 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4 apply to all writing activities.

1. **REVIEW COMPARATIVE TITLES.** *Monstrous* pulls inspiration from classic stories. Before reading it, have the class review selections from Grimm's fairy tales (such as "Rumpelstiltskin" and "Little Red Riding Hood") and, for older students, a synopsis or selections from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. While reading *Monstrous*, students should consider in what ways the novel pays homage to those classic stories and how it departs from them. What clues in the setting and characters hint at magic and monsters like the ones in those stories? What other similarities do they notice? How do the classics handle themes such as good versus evil and how does that compare to the way the same themes are addressed in *Monstrous*? (Online resources for fairy tales: <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/index.html> and <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>) (RL 3.1, 4.1, 4.9, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1; W 4.9, 5.6, 6.9)
2. **FAIRY TALE FLIP.** Every story has a hero and villain, and fairy tales tend to make those roles very clear-cut. But from reading *Monstrous*, we've learned that good and evil is not always so easily defined, and that monsters can be heroes, too.

Choose a classic fairy tale. Who is the hero and who is the villain? What are the goals and desires of each? Now, rewrite that fairy tale (in 1,000 words or less) with the monster or villain in the role of hero. Consider how this might change the ending of the story and the role of the original main character. (W 3.3, 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3)
3. **ESSAY.** One of the main themes in *Monstrous* is what makes a person good or bad (or monstrous). Kymera is physically a monster, but she is not the villain in the story. Write a brief essay with supporting examples from the text about who you believe is the real monster in the book and what makes that person monstrous. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your view. (RL 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1; W 3.1, 4.1, 4.9, 5.1, 5.9, 6.1, 6.9, 7.1, 7.9)
4. **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY.** Choose your favorite dialogue between two characters in *Monstrous*. The book is written from Kymera's point of view, but how might the other character view the scene? What details might they notice, what thoughts might they think, and how might they feel about the outcome? Keeping those details in mind, rewrite this scene from the other character's viewpoint. (RL 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1; W 3.3, 4.3, 4.9, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3)



MONSTROUS

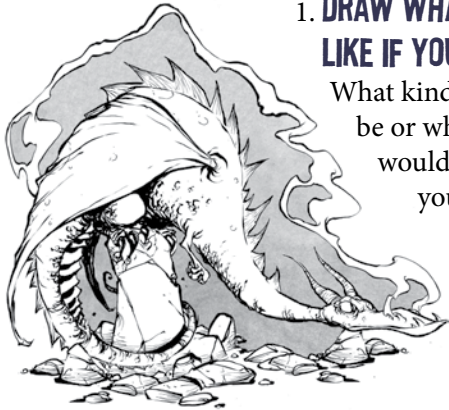
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ARTS & CRAFTS ACTIVITIES

1. DRAW WHAT YOU MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOU WERE A MONSTER.

What kind of monster would you be or what sort of monster parts would you want? Why did you choose those and how would they benefit you? How might they not benefit you?



2. **STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES.** Kymera treasures her fairy tale book and the roses she preserves by pressing them between the pages. Distribute small wildflowers or roses (thorns removed!) to the students and have them press their own flowers between the pages of a book in the classroom, using newspaper, blotting paper, or construction paper as a buffer so the flower won't stain the print. Most flowers will take 2-4 weeks to dry, and the buffer paper should be changed every few days. Once the flowers are dry, students can frame them or use them in a craft, such as a bookmark.

VOCABULARY

As you read *Monstrous*, consider the words below. Does the context provide clues to their meaning? Explain why or why not.

(RL 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4; L 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4)

- waning (p. 2)
- coup (p. 3)
- hybrid (p. 6)
- savory (p. 10)
- loam (p. 11)
- instincts (p. 17)
- dissipate (p. 32)
- noxious (p. 33)
- manticore (p. 41)
- crestfallen (p. 45)
- furtively (p. 61)
- pilfer (p. 99)
- mottled (p. 102)
- minotaur (p. 137)
- thrall (p. 142)
- filigree (p. 147)
- lute (p. 149)
- fathom (p. 154)
- ferreted (p. 208)
- cacophony (p. 210)
- blanch (p. 221)
- keening (p. 239)
- abomination (p. 274)
- nullify (p. 282)
- feral (p. 284)
- catacombs (p. 301)
- maw (p. 351)
- bravado (p. 375)
- euphoric (p. 389)
- notorious (p. 402)



This discussion guide aligns with the following ELA Common Core State Standards:

RL 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 7.2, 7.5, 7.6
W 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3, 4.9, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3, 6.9, 7.1, 7.3; L 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

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