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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Monster

by Walter Dean Myers

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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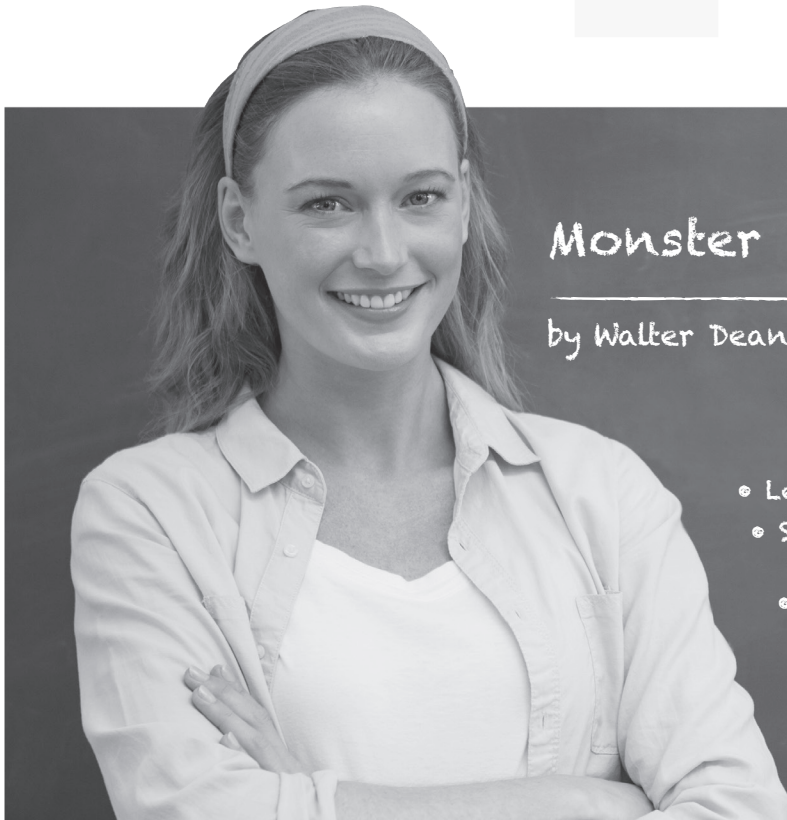
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P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938
www.prestwickhouse.com
800.932.4593

ISBN: 978-1-58049-469-4

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Item No: 300705

Monster

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the purpose of using two main formats in *Monster* (journal entries and a film script).
2. use inference to determine additional information about a character or incident.
3. evaluate Myers style and the methods he uses to make this story realistic, and discuss whether all the information on jail life, especially sexual predators, is necessary to this story.
4. discuss the legal procedures and the roles people play in a criminal trial that goes before a jury.
5. define and provide examples of the following in *Monster*: autobiography, flashback, realism, stream of consciousness, confessional literature, foreshadowing, and soliloquy.
6. discuss the importance of race, racism, and sexism in *Monster*, as evidenced in conversations between people in Harlem, comments about the victim of the crime, the roles of the different people in the courtroom, and other interactions.
7. evaluate how Steve's jail time affects his emotions during the trial and his development as a character.
8. examine the differences between being innocent and being found "not guilty," especially in relation to Steve Harmon.
9. discuss the difference between legal guilt and moral guilt, noting especially the actions of Osvaldo Cruz, James King, and Richard "Bobo" Evans.
10. identify and analyze the important points in the relationship between Steve Harmon and Kathy O'Brien.
11. recognize and discuss the uses of foreshadowing in *Monster* and discuss whether the ending is predictable.
12. evaluate the importance of male role models in Steve Harmon's life, considering especially Steve's relationship with his father and his relationship with his teacher, Mr. Sawicki.

Monster

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss the themes of guilt, innocence, justice, and ambiguity as they are developed in *Monster*, and cite examples to illustrate these themes.
2. Analyze the development of Steve Harmon's character, including his strengths and weaknesses. Focus on the degree of involvement (if any) he had in the robbery.
3. Chart and evaluate the plan Kathy O'Brien develops for defending Steve Harmon, including her management of the fact that he had been in Mr. Nesbitt's drugstore.
4. What does the author tell you about Steve as a member of the Harmon family? Explain your concept of the family's dynamics.
5. Envision yourself as a member of the jury in this case. How would you evaluate the evidence and arguments, and what would you say to the other jurors to convince them to agree with your point of view?
6. Discuss the importance of the film class in Steve's life.
7. This novel includes characters from several different racial backgrounds. Evaluate and discuss the importance of how the author treats race in the story.
8. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the community of Harlem as it is portrayed in *Monster*.
9. Discuss the treatment of women in *Monster*.
10. Based on what you have read in *Monster*, what do you think is the biggest problem in the jail system? What do you think is the biggest problem in the court system? Cite examples to support your choices.
11. Analyze the purposes and success of using two formats (diary and drama) to tell the story.
12. What kind of future do you think Steve Harmon has? Give examples to support your opinion.
13. Discuss the function of the illustrations in the novel. Do they, in your opinion, add to or distract one from the text? Why?

Monster

Pages 1-58

VOCABULARY

prosecutor – lawyer presenting the court case for the government
motions – arguments or proposals for action by a judge in a trial
juried – a contest or set of submissions evaluated by a jury
predictable – expected
felony – a serious crime that can be punishable by jail time
infringing – moving in on someone's space or rights
redress – remedy or compensation for a loss or crime
flawed – mistaken; faulty
grandiose – fancy or overly important
accomplice – helper in a crime or attempted crime
sexually harassing – bothering or threatening in a sexual way
objection – an appeal by one lawyer to a judge to stop certain questions or proceedings in court
admissible – evidence or testimony that is allowed in court
defendant – in a court proceeding, the person charged with a crime

1. The book begins with text that looks like someone's hand printing, and the words describe someone crying at night before revealing that the writer is in jail. Why would Myers, the author, open the book in such an unusual way?

2. Why, according to the narrator, is it best to cry at night when someone is being beaten up?

Pages 127-205

VOCABULARY

montage – in a film, pictures that are laid over one another in a rapid sequence

traversed – traveled or moved through

esophagus – the muscular tube that connects the lower throat and the upper stomach

trapezius – a large muscle group in the upper back

respective – separate or individual

diminutive – very small or petite

sidebar – an off-the-record conversation

concentric – having the same center

1. Kathy O'Brien says the prosecutor was playing a "cheap trick." What was this trick?

2. How does Dr. Moody say that Mr. Nesbitt died?

3. After the prisoner, Sunset, receives a guilty verdict in his trial, Steve writes about his own fears. What were Steve's initial fears in jail, and what is he worried about now?

4. In his journal, what does Steve say he did in the drugstore?

5. What does Mrs. Harmon give to Steve when she visits him in jail?

12. Why does Asa Briggs object when Mrs. Petrocelli says, "So you're acquainted with everyone involved in this robbery"?

13. How long has Mr. Sawicki known Steve Harmon, and how do they know each other?

14. According to Mr. Sawicki, what does Steve's film footage reveal about Steve?

15. Why does Mrs. Petrocelli ask Mr. Sawicki if he likes Steve Harmon?

16. What does Briggs stress about "Bobo" Evans in his closing argument?

17. What does Mr. Briggs say about Mrs. Henry?

18. What does Mrs. O'Brien stress in her closing argument in defense of Steve Harmon?
