



Monster

By Walter Dean Myers

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This *New York Times* bestselling novel from acclaimed author Walter Dean Myers tells the story of Steve Harmon, a teenage boy in juvenile detention and on trial. Presented as a screenplay of Steve's own imagination, and peppered with journal entries, the book shows how one single decision can change our whole lives.

Monster is a multi-award-winning, provocative coming-of-age story that was the first-ever Michael L. Printz Award recipient, an ALA Best Book, a Coretta Scott King Honor selection, and a National Book Award finalist. In 2016, *Monster* was turned into a film starring Jennifer Hudson, Kelvin Harrison, Jr., and A\$AP Rocky.

The late Walter Dean Myers was a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, who was known for his commitment to realistically depicting kids from his hometown of Harlem.

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Monster By Walter Dean Myers Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"Monster" is what the prosecutor called 16-year-old Steve Harmon for his supposed role in the fatal shooting of a convenience-store owner. But was Steve really the lookout who gave the "all clear" to the murderer, or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? In this innovative novel by Walter Dean Myers, the reader becomes both juror and witness during the trial of Steve's life. To calm his nerves as he sits in the courtroom, aspiring filmmaker Steve chronicles the proceedings in movie script format. Interspersed throughout his screenplay are journal writings that provide insight into Steve's life before the murder and his feelings about being held in prison during the trial. "They take away your shoelaces and your belt so you can't kill yourself no matter how bad it is. I guess making you live is part of the punishment."

Myers, known for the inner-city classic *Motown and Didi* (first published in 1984), proves with *Monster* that he has kept up with both the struggles and the lingo of today's teens. Steve is an adolescent caught up in the violent circumstances of an adult world--a situation most teens can relate to on some level. Readers will no doubt be attracted to the novel's handwriting-style typeface, emphasis on dialogue, and fast-paced courtroom action. By weaving together Steve's journal entries and his script, Myers has given the first-person voice a new twist and added yet another worthy volume to his already admirable body of work. (Ages 12 and older)
--Jennifer Hubert

From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up--Steve Harmon, 16, is accused of serving as a lookout for a robbery of a Harlem drugstore. The owner was shot and killed, and now Steve is in prison awaiting trial for murder. From there, he tells about his case and his incarceration. Many elements of this story are familiar, but Myers keeps it fresh and alive by telling it from an unusual perspective. Steve, an amateur filmmaker, recounts his experiences in the form of a movie screenplay. His striking scene-by-scene narrative of how his life has dramatically changed is riveting. Interspersed within the script are diary entries in which the teen vividly describes the nightmarish conditions of his confinement. Myers expertly presents the many facets of his protagonist's character and readers will find themselves feeling both sympathy and repugnance for him. Steve searches deep within his soul to prove to himself that he is not the "monster" the prosecutor presented him as to the jury. Ultimately, he reconnects with his humanity and regains a moral awareness that he had lost. Christopher Myers's superfluous black-and-white drawings are less successful. Their grainy, unfocused look complements the cinematic quality of the text, but they do little to enhance the story. *Monster* will challenge readers with difficult questions, to which there are no definitive answers. In some respects, the novel is reminiscent of Virginia Walter's *Making Up Megaboy* (DK Ink, 1998), another book enriched by its ambiguity. Like it, *Monster* lends itself well to classroom or group discussion. It's an emotionally charged story that readers will find compelling and disturbing.

Edward Sullivan, New York Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

Myers combines an innovative format, complex moral issues, and an intriguingly sympathetic but flawed protagonist in this cautionary tale of a 16-year-old on trial for felony murder. Steve Harmon is accused of acting as lookout for a robbery that left a victim dead; if convicted, Steve could serve 25 years to life. Although it is clear that Steve did participate in the robbery, his level of involvement is questionable, leaving protagonist and reader to grapple with the question of his guilt. An amateur filmmaker, Steve tells his story in a combination of film script and journal. The "handwritten" font of the journal entries effectively uses

boldface and different sizes of type to emphasize particular passages. The film script contains minimal jargon, explaining camera angles (CU, POV, etc.) when each term first appears. Myers' son Christopher provides the black-and-white photos, often cropped and digitally altered, that complement the text. Script and journal together create a fascinating portrait of a terrified young man wrestling with his conscience. The tense drama of the courtroom scenes will enthrall readers, but it is the thorny moral questions raised in Steve's journal that will endure in readers' memories. Although descriptions of the robbery and prison life are realistic and not overly graphic, the subject matter is more appropriate for high-school-age than younger readers. *Debbie Carton*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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