



Synopsis

Chaos Walking (The Knife of Never Letting Go)

By Patrick Ness
ISBN: 9781406385397
NZRRP: \$22.99
No. of Pages: 479

Learning Areas:

Philosophy
Gender studies
English
Reading
Writing
Language

Themes:

Language
Communication
Prejudice
Bildungsroman
Gender perspectives
Dystopia
Emotional control
Identity

Age Range:

13+yrs

Genre:

Speculative Fiction

Questions for:

Secondary

An unflinching novel about the impossible choices of growing up, by an award-winning writer.

Imagine you're the only boy in a town of men. And you can hear everything they think. And they can hear everything you think. Imagine you don't fit in with their plans... Todd Hewitt is just one month away from the birthday that will make him a man. But his town has been keeping secrets from him. Secrets that are going to force him to run...

Author Focus

Patrick Ness is the author of two critically acclaimed works of fiction, *The Crash of Hennington* and *Topics About Which I Know Nothing*. An award-winning novelist, he has also written for Radio 4, the *Sunday Telegraph* and is currently a literary critic for the *Guardian*. Patrick will be appearing at the Perth Writers Festival and Somerset Festival of Children's Literature in 2009.

"Furiously paced, terrifying, exhilarating and heartbreaking, it's a book that haunts your imagination." - *Sunday Telegraph*

Winner of the 2008 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize

Winner of the 2008 Booktrust Teenage Fiction Prize

Questions & Activities:

- In *The Knife of Never Letting Go* the men can hear each others thoughts. Ask students to explore the concept of telepathy. Create a list of the pros and cons of having this ability.
- How is the 'Noise' represented in the book? What is the effect of showing the 'Noise' in this way and how does this help you to empathise with the character Todd?
- How does Todd struggle to maintain his individuality and identity when constantly confronted with the 'Noise'. Draw a parallell between the 'Noise' and the effects of popular culture today on personal identity.
- Patrick's books are very strongly told in first person voice, using different vernaculars and vocabularies. This is a good starting point for discussion about the different ways a person's individual voice can be represented on the page. For example, ask students to write down how different accents sound.
- Todd has to make some difficult decisions as he grows older. What are some of the decisions that he makes? What would happen if Todd didn't make these decisions? Have a class discussion about decision making and techniques for helping you make the right decisions e.g. pros & cons, ethicality, legality etc.
- Ask students to imagine a world without women. How would the world be different? How has our world changed for women in the last 50 years?
- Compare a contemporary female protagonist, such as Bella from *Twilight*, to the character of Viola. How do these characters differ? How are they the same?
- Why is Todd afraid of the 'Spackle'? Where have these ideas come from? How are the people of Prentisstown prejudiced towards them?
- The fantasy and science fiction genre are often used to show truths about our own world and society. How does Patrick Ness effectively do this? Draw parrallels between our own world and the world of Todd and Viola.
- Though they're set in a fictional place, Patrick's books are really about the world around us, with information overload and the consequences of violence as important topics. Students can discuss how their everyday lives and issues can be told in fantastical ways without losing any of the feeling or truth.
- The *Chaos Walking* trilogy raises strong issues about how both sides in a conflict believe they're in the right. Ask students to pick an issue they strongly disagree with and write an argument for the other side.