



Monster

By Walter Dean Myers

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Monster By Walter Dean Myers

BONUS FEATURE: Afterword read by the author

A Harlem drugstore owner was shot and killed in his store, and the word is that 16-year-old Steve Harmon served as the lookout. Was he involved or was he simply in the wrong place at the wrong time? An amateur filmmaker, Steve transcribes his trial into a movie script, showing scene by scene how his life was turned around in an instant.

FADE IN: INTERIOR: Early morning in CELL BLOCK D, MANHATTAN DETENTION CENTER.

Steve (Voice-Over): Sometimes I feel like I have walked into the middle of a movie. Maybe I can make my own movie. The film will be the story of my life. No, not my life, but of this experience. I'll call it what the lady prosecutor called me...**Monster**.

FADE IN: INTERIOR COURT. A guard sits at a desk behind STEVE. KATHY O'BRIEN, STEVE's lawyer, is all business as she talks to STEVE.

O'BRIEN

Let me make sure you understand what's going on. Both you and this King character are on trial for felony murder. Felony murder is as serious as it gets....When you're in court, you sit there and pay attention. You let the jury know that you think the case is as serious as they do....

STEVE

You think we're going to win?

O'BRIEN (seriously)

It probably depends on what you mean by "win."

"The production is recorded as a full-cast dramatization, and it's difficult to imagine how it might have been accomplished more effectively. A superb recording of an intriguing work."—*AudioFile* Earphones Award Winner

Coretta Scott King: Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement
Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Literature for Young Adults
National Book Award finalist
Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book
Edgar Allan Poe Award nominee, Best Young Adult
Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book

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Coretta Scott King: Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement

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National Book Award finalist

Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book

Edgar Allan Poe Award nominee, Best Young Adult

Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book

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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:

Shirley Frazier:

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