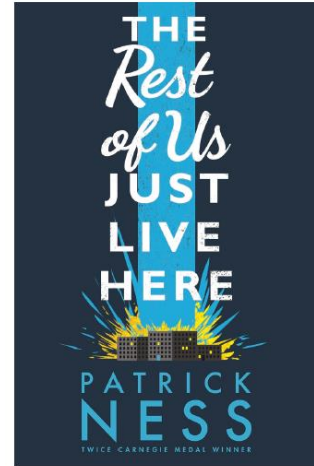


2016 Carnegie Medal shortlist reading resources

Title: **The Rest of Us Just Live Here**

Author: **Patrick Ness**

Publisher: Walker Books



TALKING POINTS

The Rest of Us Just Live Here is an unusual title – what did it lead you to expect of the book?

Parallel stories

Each chapter begins with a summary of the indie kids' story, an affectionate parody of a kind of book you might recognise. Why do you think Ness uses this device?

By making the main characters of the book *not* the ones who are off fighting monsters, does this make it easier for readers to identify with them? Do you and your friends share the same sorts of preoccupations as Mikey and his friends?

Mikey

What are the differences between the way Mikey thinks of himself and the way others see him?

What worries him? (Think, for example, about how he fits into his group of friends.)

People can grow up a lot over short periods of time; has Mikey changed, or learned things, by the end of the book?

All the major characters have things they struggle with in their lives. Do you think their experiences are basically realistic?

Friends and Family

What motivates Mikey's parents?

This is a book about people being there for each other. In the absence of present and supportive parents, on whom does Mikey depend to take on that supportive, nurturing role instead?

This is a great book about friendship, but the sibling relationships are brilliantly done, too. How important to Mikey are his sisters, Meredith?

Mel and

The normal and the supernatural

"We live in a suburb of a suburb of a suburb of a suburb of a city that takes about an hour to get to..."



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Why do you think Ness chose this middle-of-nowhere setting?

This is partly a book about the preoccupations that all teenagers have to go through. So what do the supernatural elements (zombie deer!) add to Mikey's story?

Everyday heroism

Who behaves heroically in this book? (And it's not only the indie kids...)

You don't need an external antagonist – a baddie, an enemy – to be a hero. Heroism in this book is about... what? Being yourself?

What makes Jared "different"? (Is anybody *not* different somehow?)

And finally...

Other books by Patrick Ness have typically asked brave questions about identity, tolerance and responsibility – can you see similar preoccupations in this book, too?

Jared says: "Most people just have to live their lives the best they can, doing the things that are great for *them*, having great friends, trying to make their lives better, loving people properly. All the while knowing that the world makes no sense but trying to find a way to be happy anyway." How does this apply to the book? And do you think it's good advice for life?

TALKING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights themes in this story

Basic rights to a home, enough money to live on, medical help; LGBTI rights; children's rights; freedom of association; equality and right to life

Human rights questions

We have the right to healthcare and support that we need, and adults should do what is best for children

All the main characters face difficulties; for Mel and Mikey it's disordered eating and compulsions. What do their parents do to help? Who do they turn to for support?

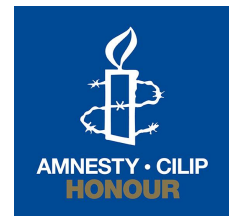
How can we show support for people we don't know?

We have the right to express opinions and to be heard

Mikey's parents fail to listen. So do all the adults of the town. What kind of atmosphere does this lead to?



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We have the right to choose our own friends

At the heart of the book is the bond between friends. Give examples of how they show each other solidarity and respect.

At the end, Mel says 'Everybody's got something'. What does this show the two groups of teenagers?

- For a full version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights go to www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr

For more free teaching resources from Amnesty International go to www.amnesty.org.uk/education



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