

# MORE THAN THIS BY PATRICK NESS



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From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—This haunting and consistently surprising novel raises deep questions about what it means to be alive, but it doesn't try to console readers with easy or pat answers. As the story opens, teenage Seth is experiencing his own death in painful detail. In the next chapter, he wakes up physically weak, covered in bandages and strange wounds, and wonders if he is in Hell or the future or somewhere else entirely. As he tries to survive in and make sense of his strange yet familiar surroundings, he is plagued by intense flashbacks of his life before he died: his guilt over the tragedy that befell his little brother, his burgeoning romance with another boy in his small town, and the events that led to his (dubious) death. Upon discovering two other young people in the blighted place he's landed, Seth begins to learn the Matrix-like truth about what has happened to the rest of humanity, how he can escape, and whether he even wants to. The intense themes in this novel make it more appropriate for older teens, but the language and sexual scenarios are clear, relevant, and neither graphic or gratuitous. A delicate balance between dystopian survival and philosophical grappling means that many different kinds of readers should appreciate the story.—Kyle Lukoff, Corlears School, New York Cityα(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

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Seth drowns, desperate and alone. But then he wakes. Naked, thirsty, starving. But alive. And where is he? The street seems familiar, but everything is abandoned, overgrown, covered in dust. He remembers dying, his skull bashed against the rocks. Has he woken up in his own personal hell? Is there more to this life, or perhaps this afterlife? From the acclaimed author of the Chaos Walking trilogy and *A Monster Calls* comes one of the most provocative teen novels of our time.

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—The Boston Globe

#### Most helpful customer reviews

43 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

Not Ness's Best

By Sarah Porter

I absolutely adored Chaos Walking and--a bit less--A Monster Calls, so I'm sorry to say that this came as a real disappointment. Ness is an accomplished writer and it's all very well done, so much so that it almost felt slick or glib at times. The parts set in Seth's "before" life were mostly awesome. But as soon as I got to the big twist I thought, "Oh God no," and then, "Well, this is Patrick Ness. Maybe he can pull it off." Not really. The premise brings up so many potential problems that it starts to feel like Ness is spending a third of the book explaining them away--There's a hormone that stops your nails from growing!--while leaving the biggest issues unaddressed--like, um, how enough food for an entire comatose society is being produced and provided. In perpetuity.

I found it maddeningly repetitive, too. I couldn't stand Seth's solipsistic ruminations, which came up over and over again. I was painfully bored by the way the Driver kept jumping out at them, so much so that I almost put the book down thirty pages before the end because I could hardly bear to read yet another iteration of the same scene. Even Ness's prose became repetitive, hammering out variants of the same sentence three or four times in a row, piling up four verbs for one action. Maybe this was supposed to heighten the drama, but for me it was more alienating than engaging. I never really believed in the characters or the world.

But hey, lots of people love this book. You might be one of them.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Incredibly Multi-Layered and Surprisingly Philosophical

By Miss Bonnie

'Haven't you ever felt like there had to be more? Like there's more out there somewhere, just beyond your grasp, and if you could only get to it...'

Imagine you wake up unaware of where you are or how you got there but the last thing you remember is dying. You died, yet somehow you didn't because you're obviously still alive, right? But imagine that you wake up in a world that seems strange; off somehow. And you can't find a single soul, it's as if the world has been completely emptied leaving only you. This is the situation Seth finds himself in.

'He can feel himself teetering again, an abyss of confusion and despair looking right back at him, threatening to swallow him if he so much as glances at it.'

This is such an engrossing tale. I was riveted and couldn't put this down. I went into this with a completely different set of expectations but they were completely dashed. The beginning of this tale had the same feel of quiet desolation that *The Road* has and I was enthralled, but Ness turned this into a total game. Just when you think you finally have a grasp on what's really going on he not only removes some vital piece of evidence but completely transforms the landscape. And this happened many, many times. I was still attempting to get a good grasp on what was truly happening with only 5 pages remaining.

It's tagged as YA but involves such a sophisticated storyline that makes it vastly different than anything out there. I can't think of a single book to compare it to and that's a wonderful thing. I hope that the YA designation doesn't deter typical adult readers. I hope that the philosophical designation doesn't deter YA readers. Suffice it to say, this book needs no designation and is something that I recommend to all for the mind-boggling experience this entails.

'Real life is only ever just real life. Messy. What it means depends on how you look at it. The only thing you've got to do is find a way to live there.'

'More Than This' is an incredibly multi-layered and surprisingly philosophical story about how your outlook and interpretation on life has the power to change...everything. It's about living life and realizing that there is always something more to live for and always... more than this.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Exploring the meaning of life

By Jeann @ Happy Indulgence

This review originally appears on Happy Indulgence. Check it out for more reviews at: [...]

Actual rating: 4.5

*More Than This* is an incredibly deep and thought-provoking book, addressing philosophical questions such as: What happens to life after death? What happens if life isn't what we think it is? What if all our beliefs are thrown out the window...is there more than this?

As the story opens with Seth drowning in an ocean, and then awakening in a strange but familiar place, we are struck with a powerful, enveloping sense of loneliness and confusion that he experiences. Seth's emotions and reflection of his actions leading up to his death are told during flashbacks, with barely any dialogue. The flashbacks contain a wonderful contrast to the empty world where he awakens, they are so full of life and love with his friend Gudmund, his younger brother Owen, his parents and friends.

The story moves through several different stages, from Seth waking up alone and discovering strange paradoxes within the new world, to developing an unlikely friendship with other residents Regina and Thomasz, and encountering the secrets within the world and the ominous figure in a black van called "the Driver". His new friends are the clue to discovering more about this world that he has woken up in, and their



stories are poignant.

Throughout the book, the whole story was shrouded in a sense of mystery and painstaking suspense. On one hand, I wanted to savour the beautiful passages that I was witnessing, and on the other I just wanted to know what was going on. After trudging through vague memories and obscure conversations, and giving you hints through Seth's observations and understandings, the book finally delivers the final piece to the puzzle. *More Than This* isn't simply about telling you the solution to the mystery, it's about experiencing it, witnessing it, putting together clues throughout the book to arrive at a final solution. Ness is a master of creating mystery, intrigue and suspense and the story is left quite open-ended. Even though we're told what is behind the world, I feel like there's still more that I need to explore in my head. This is a story that is intended to be viewed philosophically, and there are quite a few passages that refer to that in the book.

The reason why I took off .5 stars is because of its open ending, for so much mystery and tension, the big reveal felt like a bit of a letdown. It's frustrating not getting closure for Seth and the rest of the characters. The story was also kind of vague and I fail to draw any parallels that will give the book more meaning.

Is it a sci-fi? A dystopian? Thriller? Or something more? Patrick Ness seamlessly blends several genres to deliver an impactful, philosophical novel that can be considered a literary masterpiece. I was amazed at the masterful literary experience in *More Than This*, Patrick Ness's writing is fluid and lyrical, creating a large emotional impact with a few well placed words. This is my first Ness, and I can't wait to read more.

Thank you to Walker Books Australia for sending me this book in exchange for an honest review.

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