



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## The Rest of Us Just Live Here

by Patrick Ness  
ISBN: 9781406331165  
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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Award-winning writer Patrick Ness's bold and irreverent novel powerfully reminds us that there are many different types of remarkable.

## Outline:

*The Rest of Us Just Live Here* powerfully asks what if you weren't the Chosen One? The one who's supposed to fight the zombies, or the soul-eating ghosts, or whatever this new thing is, with the blue lights and the death? What if you were like Mikey? Who just wants to graduate and go to prom and maybe finally work up the courage to ask Henna out before someone goes and blows up the high school. Again. Because sometimes there are problems bigger than this week's end of the world and sometimes you just have to find the extraordinary in your ordinary life. Even if your best friend might just be the God of mountain lions...

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Patrick Ness is the award-winning and best-selling author of the Chaos Walking trilogy, *A Monster Calls* and *More Than This*. John Green has described him as "an insanely beautiful writer". He has won every major prize in children's fiction, including the Carnegie Medal twice. He's written the film of *A Monster Calls* as well, out 2016. He lives in London.

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

### These notes are for:

- Secondary years 8+
- Ages 14+

### Example of:

- Young Adult Fiction

### Themes/Ideas:

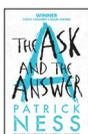
- Friendship
- Mental illness
- Coming-of-age
- Supernatural

## Other Titles by Patrick Ness:

### The Chaos Walking Trilogy



**The Knife of Never Letting Go**  
Patrick Ness  
9781406357981 PB  
Classroom ideas available



**The Ask and the Answer**  
Patrick Ness  
9781406357998 PB



**Monsters of Men**  
Patrick Ness  
9781406358001 PB



**More Than This**  
Patrick Ness  
9781406350487 PB  
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**A Monster Calls**  
Patrick Ness  
Jim Kay  
9781406339345 PB  
Classroom ideas available



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## Discussion Questions and Activities:

Why do you think Patrick Ness included the chapter starters that describe the indie kids? Does this distance the indie kids' story from that of Mike and his friends?

Describe a typical indie kid. How would Mike and his friends identify an indie kid? How does Mike feel about them? Why has Patrick Ness described these characters this way?

Discuss the meaning of the title before reading the book and after reading the book. Were your predictions of the meaning correct? Brainstorm some other names for the book.

Mike's family members have alliterative names – Michael, Melinda, Meredith Mitchell – compare this to the secret identities of classic super heroes and their supporting characters (e.g. Spider-Man/Peter Parker, Lois Lane, Hulk/Bruce Banner, etc.) Do you think Patrick Ness was deliberately referencing superheroes by giving some characters alliterative names? Why?

Describe Mike's tics. What do they symbolise? When are they most apparent? How does Jared help?

In Chapter the Third, Michael describes to the reader all the past supernatural events that happened in the town. What genres of books or films is Patrick Ness referencing? What effect do these references have on the tone of *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*? Name some examples of specific books or films that fit these references.

*“Me, all I want to do is graduate. And have a last summer with my friends. And go away to college. And (more than) kiss Henna (more than) once. And then get on with finding out about the rest of my life. Don't you?”* (Page 35)

There are times in the book when Michael addresses the reader directly. What effect does this have on the reader? How does this help you connect with the narrator and his story?

Describe the relationship dynamics between the Mitchell family members. What effect does Mrs Mitchell's career focus have on her family? What about Mr Mitchell's alcoholism, Mike's anxiety and Mel's eating disorder?

Why does Mike dislike Nathan? What effect does Nathan have arriving and being the new guy in their close circle of friends?

*“Just remember, please, most of that stuff is in the past. It isn't the story I want to tell. At all. You needed to know it, but for the rest of this, I'm choosing my own story. Because if you can't do that, you might as well just give up.”* (page 63)

What does Mike mean by this statement? Why is it important for Mike to give his backstory even though it's not the story he wanted to tell? How does this statement apply to Mike's experience with anxiety throughout the book?

*“I have a normal American family, Cynthia, and just like any family, we try to face our challenges with grace and dignity. I love my children more than anything in the world, and I would never do this if I didn't have their complete support.”* (page 167)

Does Alice Mitchell truly believe she has the support of her family, or is she lying? Discuss the concept of “normal” in the context of a family. Why is having the outward appearance of normalcy desirable?

*“I'm the one here who's least wanted.”* (page 194)

Why does Mike think he is the least wanted in his circle of friends? Is he right? How does this feeling affect him?

*“We're not the kind of people that story happens to.”* (page 268)

What does Mel mean by this statement? What kind of people are they?

Why does Jared keep secrets from Mike?

Why do you think Mike doesn't accept Jared's offer of healing him completely? What would you have done in that situation?

Discuss the development of Mike and Henna's relationship throughout the course of the book. How is this love/friendship dynamic different to many of the characters in other Young Adult novels Patrick Ness references in this book?

Compile a list of resources for those suffering from mental illness, alcoholism and eating disorders. This should include helplines, help available in your school, local doctors and hospitals, etc.

What could you do for a friend who is suffering one of the illnesses or disorders that are apparent in the book? How can someone be supportive to a friend in need?