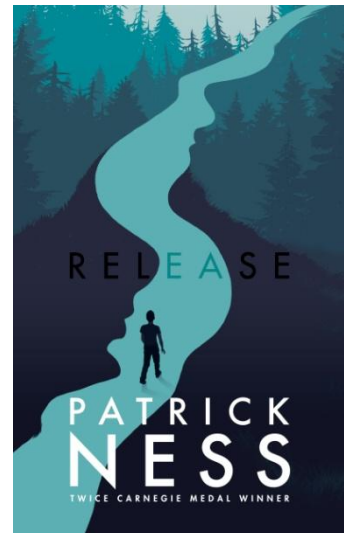


2018 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **RELEASE**

Author: **Patrick Ness**

Publisher: **Walker Books**



Release begins with an epigraph from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, a book from which Ness draws some inspiration. If you've read it, can you see the links between the two? And if you haven't, are you curious to try it now?

ONE DAY

Release – like *Mrs Dalloway* – takes place over the course of a single day. How does this affect the pace and tension of how the story unfolds?

What makes this seemingly ordinary Saturday so life-alteringly different from every other?

The day in question is filled with revelations of all kinds – how do they leave our complex central character changed by the time his day has ended?

FAMILY AND RELIGION

Early in the book we're introduced to Adam's parents – how have their conservative, homophobic views affected him? How is he still in thrall to the "Yoke"?

Have Adam's parents been forced to confront – or even to change – some of their views by the time the day is over? (There's even a direct confrontation between Adam and his father – what did you make of this scene?)

We see there can be hypocrisy mixed with the religion when we learn Marty's secret, and Marty proves not to be quite as straight-forward and perfect (in his parents' eyes) as he seemed. Why do you think Ness uses him in this role?

LINUS AND ENZO

Are Adam and Linus in love, do you think? Does Adam *want* to love Linus? How is Adam's second love – Linus – different from Enzo, his first?



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Enzo always resisted 'labels', he used physical contact more than words, and Adam wonders now why he'd accepted this. "Without argument or demand. Without even apparent self-respect." Why did he, do you think?

What role does Enzo still have in Adam's life – and why?

WRITING SEX

Along with *Mrs Dalloway*, the other book Ness has cited as an inspiration is Judy Blume's *Forever*. (Blume even gets a mention in *Release*.) One of the connections made between these books is the uncomplicated frankness with which teenage sex and intimacy are written about. Blume's book is thought to have opened the way for much of the writing/reading that came after it. Do you think *Release* might be boundary-breaking in some ways, too?

Are the descriptions of sex (and Adam's conversations about it with, for example, Angela) one of the ways Ness shows us the differences between Adam's two relationships?

Sex between Adam and Linus is described, in some detail, as an act of physical intimacy, but there's a lot more to it than just the physical, too: it's emotionally complex, awkward, funny. Have you seen other writers attempt – successfully or not – to tackle the complexities of this subject so fully and so frankly before?

Alongside the positive evocations of mutual sexual desire and pleasure, we also see very ugly sexual harassment from Adam's creepy boss. What do he and his ultimatum add to the story Ness is telling us?

RELEASE

What do you think of this one-word title? What are the different things it might be referring to?

Which characters, other than Adam, might be said to be looking for 'release' of some kind?

The book is about – among other things – being freed from the shackles of other people's expectations, of barriers, of lies. Does the desired 'release' from all these things come by the time the day is over?

ANGELA

What does Adam get from his relationship with Angela that he doesn't get from anyone else?



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The news that Angela is moving abroad is an earthquake in Adam's life. Why does he depend on her so much?

In what ways is Angela – like Adam – a sort of outsider? (And who isn't?)

THE PARALLEL STORY

This might have been a simpler book if it told only Adam's story; so what do you think the parallel supernatural story of the queen, the faun and the murdered girl add to it?

Could you see the connections between the two stories as you read? Was there a moment near the end when it suddenly made sense? Or if you felt they never did connect very clearly, did you mind?

Do you feel these supernatural aspects of the book are more or less incidental to Adam and the "main" story, or attempting to convey something profound about the kind of forces at play beyond what we can see in our everyday world?

SURVIVING

Patrick Ness has written that he thinks it a miracle that anybody survives the difficulties of their teenage years at all. What, on this day, helps Adam to survive and grow?

In many of Ness's books we see how our survival depends on facing up to *truth*. How does that idea relate to *Release*?

How did you feel about the ending? Satisfying? Frustrating? Tidy? Hopeful? Complex? Appropriate? Could the book plausibly have ended differently? (And now that you've read it, what sort of reader would you recommend this book to?)

AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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