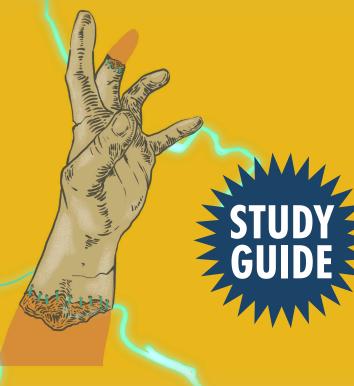
MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

BY DAVID CATLIN

DIRECTED BY BRIAN ISAAC PHILLIPS



PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CINCINNATI SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
STUDY GUIDE COURTESY OF INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE
DESIGNED BY EMILY BOYER

NOV 8-24, 2024





MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

LEARNING STANDARDS

FOR GRADES 9-12

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

BY

DAVID CATLIN

FEATURING

JASIMINE BOULDIN ALEXIS BRONKOVIC* BILLY CHACE* JOHN PATRICK HAYDEN' JAY WADE*

SCENIC DESIGNER

SAM RENO

COSTUME DESIGNER

RAINY EDWARDS

LIGHTING DESIGNER

SOUND DESIGNER

PROJECTION DESIGNER

JEFF ADELBERG[^]

ZACK BENNETT

ROBERT CARLETON STIMMEL

STAGE MANAGER

ELENA RING



2

DIRECTED BY





NOVEMBER 8-24, 2024

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN PREMIERED AT LOOKINGGLASS THEATRE COMPANY IN CHICAGO, MAY 2019.

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN IS PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH BRET ADAMS, LTD., 448 WEST

44TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10036. WWW.BRETADAMSLTD.NET

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FOR THE FULL MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN PROGRAM WHICH INCLUDES COMPREHENSIVE SHOW CREDITS, CAST AND CREW BIOS, AND MORE!



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



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^The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in this production are represented by United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



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Merrimack Repertory Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LDRT), a consortium of regispland theatres throughout the nation, and AEA (Actors' Equity Association), SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Society), and USA (United Scenic Artists).

SYNOPSIS—THE STORY OF MARY SHELLEY'S ACTIVITIES (BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY) FRANKENSTEIN THE FRANKENSTEIN MYTH VOCABULARY

English Language Arts – Writing, Language W. 3, W.4, W. 5, W.10, L.1, L.2, L.5

BIOS

MARY SHELLEY
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
LORD BYRON
CLAIR CLAIRMONT
JOHN POLIDORI

ACTIVITIES (BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY) INVENTION VENN DIAGRAM TWO DECADES

English Language Arts – Reading, Speaking and Listenina

R.1, R.2, R.7, R.8, R.9, SL.3, SL.4

THE ARCTIC

History and Social Science – World History II HSS.WHII.T3.01, HSS.WHII.T3.03, HSS.WHII.T7.01

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WRITING PROMPTS

Theatre Arts – Responding T.R.07, T.R.08, T.R.09

MATERIALS IN THE STUDY GUIDE GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE STAFF OF INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN IS PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CINCINNATI SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, INITIALLY BUILT AND REHEARSED IN CINCINNATI, OHIO, BEFORE THIS RUN AT MRT. FOUNDED IN 1993, CINCINNATI SHAKESPEARE COMPANY (CSC) IS A PROFESSIONAL, RESIDENT ENSEMBLE THEATER BRINGING SHAKESPEARE AND THE CLASSICS TO LIFE FOR ALL. LED BY PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CEO BRIAN ISAAC PHILLIPS, CSC PRODUCES NINE PLAYS ANNUALLY AT THE 262-SEAT OTTO M. BUDIG THEATER IN CINCINNATI'S OVER-THE-RHINE NEIGHBORHOOD. CSC ALSO HAS ROBUST EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS THAT REACH YOUNG PEOPLE AND AUDIENCES IN THE STATES OF OHIO, KENTUCKY, AND INDIANA. PRODUCING PRODUCTIONS IN PARTNERSHIP LIKE THIS IS COST-EFFECTIVE, HELPING THEATERS STREAMLINE OPERATIONS, MAXIMIZE BUDGETS, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY PERFORMANCES TO A WIDER AUDIENCE.

THE STORY OF MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

David Catlin's adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* tells not only the fictional story of the novel, but also the true story of how the book came to be written. As the play begins, Mary Godwin, her soon-to-be husband the up-and-coming poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, her stepsister Claire Clairmont, the famous and infamous poet Lord Byron, and Byron's person physician, John Polidori, are spending the summer of 1816 together in a villa on Lake Geneva, Switzerland, Lord Byron has suggested that each write a ghost story, and as Mary begins to tell her tale, the quintet acts it out. As Mary weaves elements of her own life into her story, fiction and fact intertwine.

The tale begins in the Arctic, with a ship stuck in the ice. A half-frozen man is found and brought aboard. His name is Victor Frankenstein, and he tells the captain how he came to be there. Victor grew up in Geneva with an adopted sister, Elizabeth, a baby brother, William (called Willmouse), and a best friend, Henry. As a youth, Victor was fascinated by the ancient pursuits of alchemy (finding an all-healing elixir of life) and necromancy (raising the dead). These interests

are intensified when his mother dies of yellow fever.

Victor leaves home for the University of Ingolstadt, where he studies anatomy and the galvanizing power of electricity. His anatomy studies require the careful examination of corpses, and Victor becomes obsessed with the idea of creating life from death. After six years of intense focus, he assembles a body out of a collection of parts and succeeds in bringing it to life. As soon as the Creature opens his eyes, however, Victor is horrified by what he has done and rejects him.

Meanwhile, Henry has traveled to Ingolstadt and finds Victor terribly ill. He nurses him back to health, but just as the two are about to return to Geneva, they receive a letter from Elizabeth saying that little Willmouse has been murdered.

Back home, Victor goes to the meadow where it happened, and he sees the Creature. Blaming himself for his brother's death, Victor goes climbing in the Alps, where the Creature finds him and confronts him.

The Creature now tells his side of the story.

After escaping from Victor's laboratory, he is attacked and beaten. He hides in the forest.

where he learns to forage. Eventually he finds a family in a remote cottage, and after months of watching their daily lives, he learns language. Fear-

ing to reveal himself,
he speaks only to the
blind father, who treats
him kindly.

When the

rest of
the family
returns unexpectedly, however,
they are horrified by
the Creature. They drive
him out, pack up their
belongings, and move away.
Heartbroken and angry, the
Creature burns down the
cottage.

Discovering Victor's journal in the pocket of a cloak he took from the laboratory, the Creature decides to go to Geneva to try to find Victor. There he meets a young boy who starts screaming when he sees him. While trying to calm the boy, the Creature accidentally



DEPICTION OF A VICTORIAN TUDOR REVIVAL COUNTRY HOUSE. | INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

kills him. He follows Victor into the Alps and begs him to create a Companion who will not be frightened by his appearance.

Victor goes to the remote Orkney Islands to build the Companion, but then destroys his work. Once again thwarted in his very human desire for love and connection, the enraged Creature vows to exact a horrible revenge. Victor follows the Creature north to the Arctic, where the story finds its ending.

THE FRANKENSTEIN MYTH

BY RICHARD J ROBERTS, INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE'S RESIDENT DRAMATURG

The birth of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is one of the most extraordinary tales in literary history. In the summer of 1816, Lord Byron, the superstar poet of Regency England, decided to flee the many scandals, sexual and financial, that hounded him. He took with him John Polidori, fresh out of medical school and an aspiring writer, to be his personal physician and traveling companion, and rented the Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Meanwhile Claire Clairmont, who was pregnant with Byron's child, convinced her stepsister, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and Mary's soon-to be husband, the up-and-

coming poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, to follow Byron. The two poets had been eager to meet each other, and the Shelley family settled in Maison Chapuis, just down the hill.

It was an unusually rainy, gloomy summer; in fact, the year 1816 is known as the Year without a Summer. Temperatures in Europe were the coldest on record. Byron suggested they each write a ghost story in competition. Percy wrote a fragment of a poem; Byron began and quickly abandoned a novel; and Polidori belabored, according to Mary, "some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady."

DEPICTION OF [VILLA DIODATI AND GENEVA, SWITZERLAND] BY JEAN DUBOIS. 1834-1840. | ONPAPER.ART

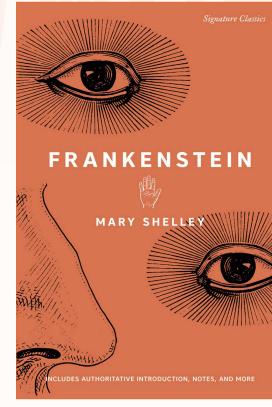


(Later that summer Polidori, inspired by Byron's abandoned novel, would write a short novella, The Vampyre, which would become a very important step in the development of the genre.)

But it was Mary's effort that would have the greatest impact. One late night, after a discussion of galvanism and the nature of life itself, Mary had what she called "a waking dream": "I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion." Mary began work on her novel almost immediately. It was published in 1819 and has never been out of print since.

It is important to remember that the title character of *Frankenstein* is not the Creature, but the Creature's creator. Like Don Quixote, Ebenezer Scrooge, or Sherlock Holmes, the Creature is a character who has grown beyond his origin literature. Millions of people who have never read *Frankenstein* know who the Creature is—or think they do. The many film and TV adaptations of the story often focus on the shocking and horrific events of the tale, while ignoring its deep, thoughtful, often very personal underpinnings.

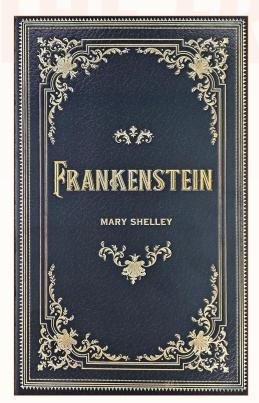
Mary filled *Frankenstein* with autobiographical details: her anxieties, fears, and painful memories about birth, children, parenting, and death. The scientist labors to create his Creature and bring him to life—like a parent—only to instantly abandon him: a clear case of child abuse. Mary's mother, the



FRANKENSTEIN BOOK COVER, SIGNATURE CLASSICS EDITION | BARNES & NOBLE

famous early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, died when Mary was 11 days old. While that death was certainly not intentional abuse, the child's feelings of abandonment were no less acute. Her stepmother strongly favored her own child (Claire) over Mary, and when push came to shove, Mary was sent away from the family to live in Scotland. When Mary fell in love with Percy Bysshe Shelley, an anarchist disciple of her father, political philosopher William Godwin, her father refused to support the couple, emotionally or financially. This is not surprising— Shelley was, at the time, a married man—but it is not an offering of unconditional parental love.

STUDY GUIDE: FRANKENSTEIN | 2024



FRANKENSTEIN BOOK COVER, MASTERPIECE LIBRARY EDITION | BLACKCATMEDINA.COM

Mary's own experience of motherhood was fraught with pain. Mary and Percy's first child, Clara, died when she was twelve days old. Mary's grief was profound. A month later she wrote in her journal: "Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby." A healthy son, William, called Willmouse, was born in January 1816, and Mary and Percy brought him with them to Lake Geneva. A sister, Clara Everina, would be born the next year, but she would die at 12 months. Nine months later Willmouse would die at age 3. Only their fourth child, Percy Florence, born five months later, would survive to adulthood. In a harsh twist of fate (or perhaps a subconscious premonition), Victor Frankenstein's young brother, who is accidentally killed by the Creature, is named William. Playwright David Catlin furthers the autobiographical connection by using the nickname Willmouse, which does not appear in the novel.

Victor's anxieties as creator are a reflection not only of Mary's traumas as a parent, but of her fears as a writer. Both Mary's parents and her stepmother were well-known published authors. As she was writing *Frankenstein* in the summer of 1816, she was surrounded by writers: Byron was wildly talented and wildly famous, and Percy was a published young poet who showed great promise. Even Polidori had more finished works than Mary, an 18-year-old girl at a time when her age and even more her gender were strikes against her. Although Mary was extremely well read on a wide range of subjects, her lack of formal education was a source of insecurity.

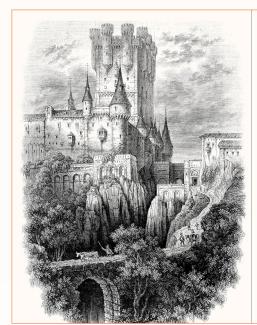
Mary did not let her inexperience or her fears stop her from expressing ideas that she felt strongly about, no matter how they might be received. In bringing life to his Creature and then abandoning it, Victor gives birth, but fails to stick around for the important work of caring, nurturing, and loving his offspring—he has no maternal instinct. As a result, the Creature, who naturally seeks love and compassion but is denied again and again, becomes, almost against his will, a killer. The personal becomes political as the uncaring parent who creates an angry, violent child mirrors the uncaring government who creates an angry, violent people. The

Creature's ugliness, which causes everyone who sees him to assume the worst about him, becomes a metaphor for society's worst reactions to otherness of all kinds: racism, sexism, religious intolerance, xenophobia, homophobia....

In Frankenstein, Mary created a myth of modern science—the rare myth whose source we can track to a specific person at a specific time. But the book does not present science as the cure for humanity's ills. Victor's Enlightenment goals of experimentation, discovery, and knowledge clash with his Romantic attributes of individuality, pride, and recklessness, leading to disaster. For Victor, work always comes first. This obsession, along with his adherence to traditional gender roles and his lust for personal fame, leads him to ignore the needs of his friends and family—which results in no great benefit for humanity, but in fact the death of every person he loves. Victor Frankenstein is not the hero of his own story; he is the monster.

Today, Frankenstein is generally considered to be one of the greatest Romantic and Gothic novels, as well as perhaps the first science fiction novel. In an interview with the website Den of Geek, film director Guillermo del Toro described Frankenstein as "the quintessential teenage book.... You don't belong. You were brought to this world by people that don't care for you, and you are thrown into a world of pain and suffering, and tears and hunger. It's an amazing book written by a teenage girl. It's mind-blowing." Mary Shelley's myth of modern science looks at the same questions asked by the myths of Ancient Greece: Why am I here? What is the right thing to do? How can I find love?

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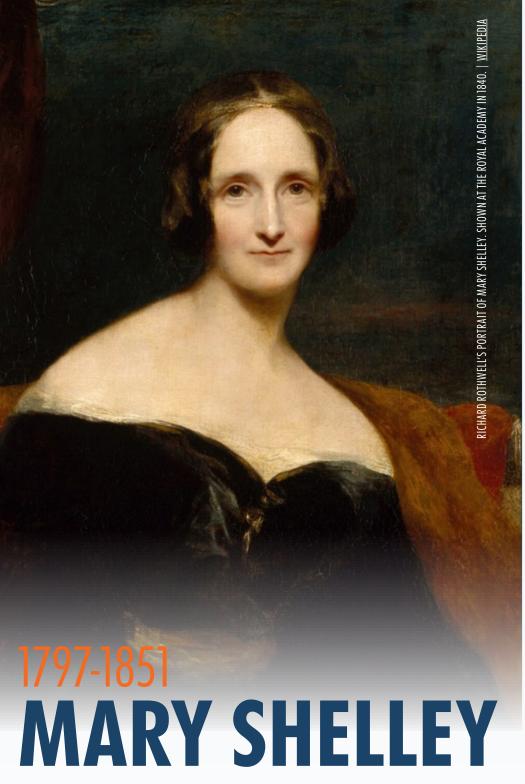
FRANKENSTEIN OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

LETTER I

To Mrs. Saville, England

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17-You WILL REJOICE to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here vesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking

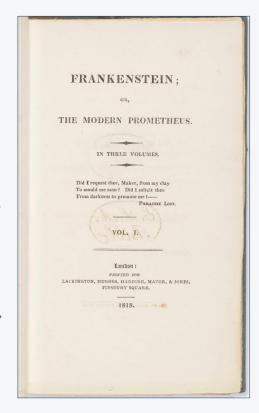
I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by this wind of promise, my daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is forever visible: its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There-for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators-there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there



Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was born in 1797, the daughter of political philosopher William Godwin, one of the forefathers of the anarchist movement, and early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). Eleven days after Mary's birth, her mother died of blood poisoning. In 1801, Mary's father married a neighbor, Mary Jane Clairmont. Mary's only formal education was six months at a boarding school in 1811, but her father tutored her on a wide range of subjects, and she was an avid reader. Godwin described his 15-yearold daughter as "singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible."

In May 1814, Mary began a relationship with poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was married at the time. That July, Mary and Percy left for Europe together, taking Mary's stepsister Claire with them. For six weeks they traveled through France and Switzerland, reading, writing, and discussing the creative process. During the trip, Mary became pregnant with Percy's child. Returning to London in September, the three lived together. In February, Mary and Percy's daughter Clara was born two months premature; she died 12 days later. In January 1816, Mary and Percy's son William was born; he was soon nicknamed Willmouse.

Mary, Percy, and Claire spent the summer of 1816 on Lake Geneva in Switzerland with the poet Lord Byron and his personal physician, John Polidori. It was an unusually rainy, gloomy summer, and Byron suggested they each write a ghost story in competition. One



FRANKENSTEIN OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS, VOLUME 1 FIRST EDITION. | WIKIPEDIA

late night, after a discussion of galvanism and the nature of life itself, Mary conceived the story of *Frankenstein*: "I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world." Mary began work on the novel almost immediately.

In September, Mary, Percy, and Claire returned to England. On December 10, Percy's

wife committed suicide. On December 30, Mary and Percy married. In 1818, *Frankenstein*, or the Modern Prometheus was published and the couple moved to Italy. They never settled in one place, focused on reading, writing, sightseeing, and socializing. In September, their second daughter, Clara Everina, died at 12 months. In June 1819, Willmouse died at age 3. In November, Percy Florence was born, the only one of Mary and Percy's children to survive to adulthood.



WILLIAM "WILLMOUSE" SHELLEY, PAINTED JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH FROM MALARIA IN 1819 (PORTRAIT BY AMELIA CURRAN, 1819) | WIKIPEDIA

In 1822, Percy drowned during a storm at sea. In 1823 Mary returned to England with her son. She spent the rest of her life editing and promoting Percy's work. "I am to make him beloved to all posterity." Mary also continued her own writing career: a total of seven novels, two travel books, and numerous encyclopedia articles and short stories.

She practiced her mother's feminist principles, both philosophically and financially. While several men over the years pursued her romantically, she never responded with more than flirting. She told one man who proposed that after being married to one genius, she could only marry another. In 1851, Mary Shelley died at the age of 53; doctors suspected a brain tumor.

Mary's novels often feature autobiographical elements. She used the historical novel to comment on gender relations, introducing women into traditionally masculine genres and questioning established theological and political institutions. She set the male's compulsive greed for conquest in opposition to female alternatives: reason and sensibility, promoting the values of friendship, domesticity, and equality. She was committed to cooperation, mutual dependence, and self-sacrifice. She was particularly interested in the education and social role of women. She believed that if female values could triumph over violent and destructive masculinity, men would be freed to express the "compassion, sympathy, and generosity" of their better natures.

Frankenstein, like much Gothic fiction of the period, mixes a visceral and disturbing subject matter with speculative and thought-provoking themes. Rather than focusing on the twists and turns of the plot, the novel leans into the mental and moral struggles of the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein. Mary imbued the text with her own brand of politicized Romanticism, one that criticized the individualism and egotism of traditional Romanticism. Victor Frankenstein

rebels against tradition; he creates life; and

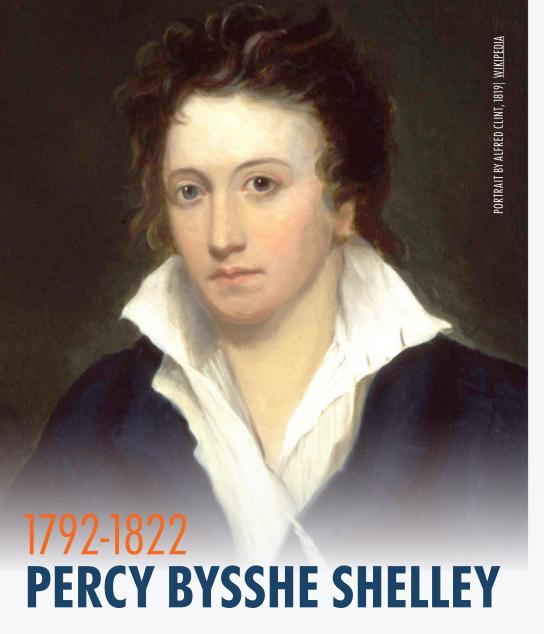
he shapes his own destiny—but these choices are not portrayed positively. The novel demonstrates the individual's lack of control over history. Professor Jane Blumberg writes, "his relentless ambition



Scholars now consider Mary Shelley to be a major Romantic figure, significant for her literary achievement and her political voice as a woman and a liberal.

is a self-delusion, clothed as quest for truth."

FRANKENSTEIN: OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS, FIRST EDITION. | SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE



Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792. He studied at Eton and then Oxford, where in 1811 he and a fellow student, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, published a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism*; the next month, both were expelled. Later that year he married Harriet Westbrook, and the next year he

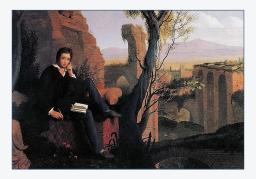
wrote *Queen Mab*, a utopian allegory preaching atheism, free love, republicanism, and vegetarianism.

In late December 1810, Shelley had met Harriet Westbrook, a pupil at the same boarding school as Shelley's sisters. Later on, putting

aside his philosophical objections to matrimony, he went with the sixteenyear-old Harriet to Edinburgh on 25 August 1811, and they were married there on the 28th. Soon the marriage began to deteriorate, and Percy began a relationship

with Mary Godwin. In 1814, Percy, Mary, and Mary's stepsister Claire traveled through France and Switzerland, reading, writing, and discussing the creative process. During the trip, Mary became pregnant with Percy's child. Returning to London, the three lived together. In February 1815, Mary and Percy's daughter Clara was born two months premature; she died 12 days later. In January 1816, their son William was born.

Mary, Percy, and Claire spent the summer of 1816 on Lake Geneva in Switzerland with the poet Lord Byron and his personal physician, John Polidori. Percy found Byron to be a great inspiration, and the two men became lifelong close friends. While Mary began work on her novel *Frankenstein*, Percy wrote his poems "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc." In September, Mary, Percy, and Claire returned to England. On December 10, Percy's wife committed suicide. On December 30, Mary and Percy married. In 1818, both *Frankenstein* and Percy's "Ozmandias" were published, and the couple moved to Italy.

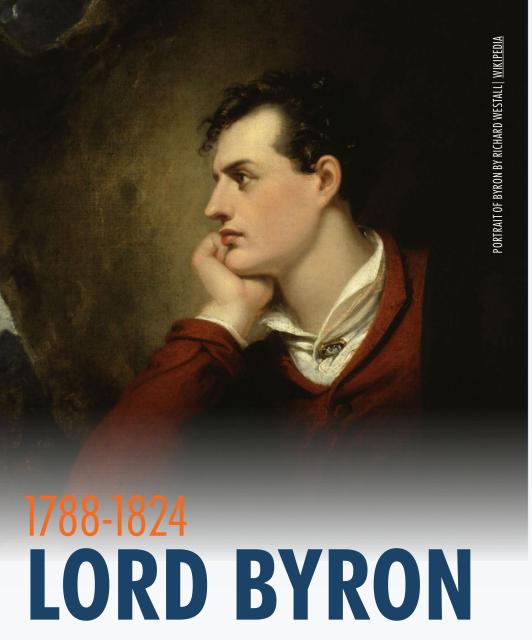


POSTHUMOUS PORTRAIT OF SHELLEY WRITING PRO-METHEUS UNBOUND IN ITALY – PAINTING BY JOSEPH SEVERN, 1845 | <u>WIKIPEDIA</u>

In 1820, Percy published three major works: "To a Nightingale," one of his most enduring poems; *Prometheus Unbound*, a long dramatic poem inspired by the mythical figure who brought fire to humanity; and *The Cenci*, a yerse drama of rape,

murder, and incest based on a bit of Renaissance history. In July 1822 Percy drowned in a boating accident during a storm at sea.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was a radical in his political and social views as well as in his poetry. He advocated free love (despite marrying twice), parliamentary reform, the expansion of voting rights, an end to aristocratic and clerical privilege, and a more equal distribution of income and wealth. His poem "The Mask of Anarchy" (1819) has been called perhaps the first modern statement of the principle of nonviolent resistance. He became an important influence on generations of poets, including Browning, Swinburne, Hardy, and Yeats. Today he is considered one of the major English Romantic poets, acclaimed for the sweeping momentum of his poetic imagery; his mastery of genres and verse forms; and the complex interplay of skeptical, idealist, and materialist ideas in his work.



George Gordon Byron was born in 1788, the son of a British army captain and a Scots heiress. At age 10, the boy unexpectedly inherited a title. He studied at Harrow and Cambridge. At the age of 19 he published his first volume of poetry, Hours of Idleness. Traveling through Europe he began *Childe*

Harold's Pilgrimage, a long narrative poem expressing the melancholy and disillusionment felt by a generation weary of revolution and Napoleonic wars. When the first two Cantos (sections) of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage were published in 1812, it was acclaimed by critics and public alike. In Byron's own

words, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

To escape growing debts and scandals, the handsome superstar poet married Annabella Millbanke in 1815, around the time he wrote one of his most famous poems, "She Walks in Beauty." Annabella soon began to believe he was insane, and in 1816 she left him. That summer he rented Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva for the summer, planning to spend time with his personal physician, John Polidori. Soon Claire Clairmont, who



While Mary began Frankenstein, Byron worked on the next canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and wrote several poems, including one of his most famous, "The Prisoner of Chillon." In September, Byron dismissed Polidori and moved on to Venice. (When Polidori wrote his novella The Vampyre, he clearly modeled his antagonist on Byron himself: handsome and charming, but also



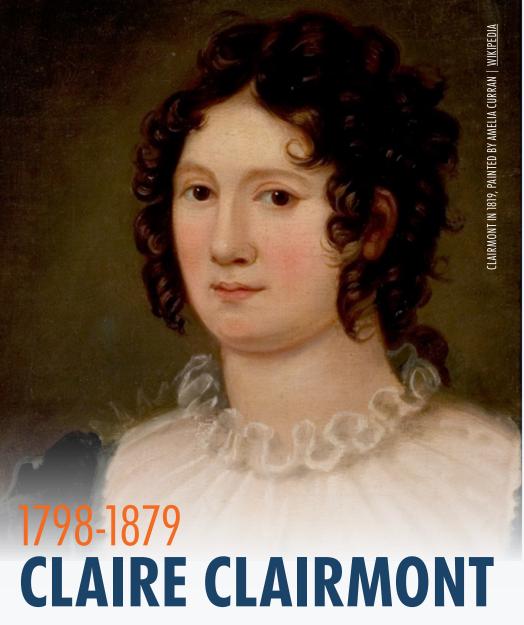
he published the first two of Cantos of Don *Juan*, a witty satire on the hypocrisy of social and sexual conventions and pretenses. In 1823, he decided to fight for the Greeks in their struggle for independence from Turkish rule, spending £10.000 of his own money and commanding a brigade of soldiers. But in 1824 he died of a violent

IN 4 CANTOS, LONDON. FRONTISPIECE TO A C. 1825 EDITION OF CHILDE HAROLD'S

PILGRIMAGE | WIKIPEDIA

fever at age 36.

A leading figure of the Romantic Movement, Lord Byron is considered one of the greatest English poets. His own life, as well as the characters he created, inspired the so-called Byronic hero: an idealized but flawed persona whose attributes include great talent, violent passion, a distaste for society and social institutions, a lack of respect for rank and privilege (although possessing both), thwarted love, rebellion, exile, an unsavory secret past, arrogance, a cruel streak, and a self-destructive nature.



Claire Clairmont was born in 1798, the daughter of unmarried Mary Jane Vial Clairmont, In 1801, Claire's mother married William Godwin, who had a daughter Mary. Claire was fluent in French and was later said to speak five languages.

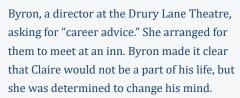
At 16, Claire was a lively brunette with a

tion. She aided Mary's clandestine meetings ple eloped for Europe, they took Claire with them. For six weeks they traveled through France and Switzerland, reading, writing, and discussing the creative process. Claire read Rousseau, Shakespeare, and the works

good singing voice and a hunger for recogniwith Percy Bysshe Shelley, and when the cou-

of Mary's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Returning to London, the three lived together. It is thought that during this time, Percy and Claire were lovers.

Claire hoped to become a writer or an actress. In March 1816 she wrote to Lord



Claire convinced Mary and Percy that they should follow Byron to Switzerland, where they met him and his personal physician John Polidori, at the Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva. It soon became apparent that Claire was pregnant with Byron's child. While Mary began to write Frankenstein, Claire and Byron resumed their liaison, although he called her "a little fiend."

In September, Mary, Percy, and Claire returned to England. In March 1818, when the trio decided to move to Italy, Byron agreed to raise his and Claire's child on the condition that Claire keep her distance. Byron placed the child in a convent school, where she died at the age of five from typhus or malaria. Claire hated Byron for the rest of her life.



CLARA ALLEGRA BYRON, CHILD OF CLAIRE CLAIRMONT AND LORD BYRON, ABOUT 1822 | WIKIPEDIA

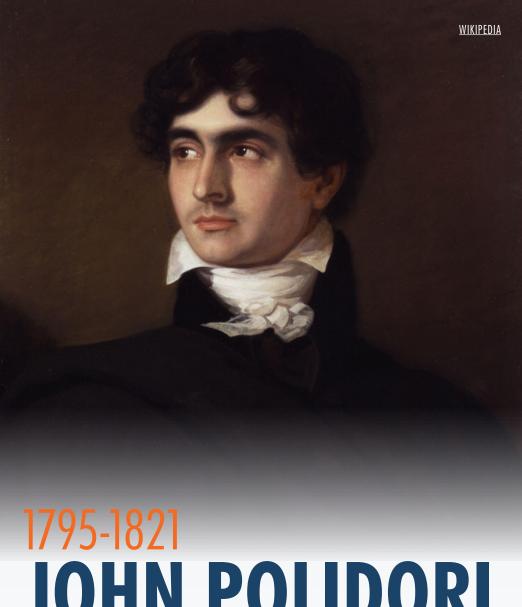
By this time, Claire was no longer living with the Shelleys. She lived in Vienna, Russia, and Dresden, working as a companion, governess, and housekeeper. She made a few unsuccessful literary attempts: "In our family, if you cannot write an epic or novel that by its originality knocks all other novels on

the head, you are a despicable creature, not worth acknowledging."

In 1836 Claire returned to England, where she worked as a music teacher and cared for her dying mother. She moved to Pisa in 1841, and she lived in Paris for a time. She carried on a sometimes turbulent, bitter correspondence with Mary until Mary's death in 1851. In 1870 Claire moved to Florence, where she died in 1879 at the age of 80. The Aspern Papers by Henry James is based on the letters Shelley wrote to Claire, which she saved until her death.



TOMB OF CLAIRE CLAIRMONT AT CIMITERO DELLA MISERI-CORDIA DELL'ANTELLA, FLORENCE, ITALY | <u>WIKIPEDIA</u>



JOHN POLIDORI

John Polidori was born in Westminster in 1795, the son of an Italian political scholar and an English governess. (His sister's children, born after his death, would include the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the poet Christina Rossetti.) Little is known of John's childhood. He attended the University

of Edinburgh, where he wrote a thesis on sleepwalking and became a doctor at the age of 19. He also wrote three verse dramas on classical themes.

The next year, Polidori was recommended to Lord Byron as a suitable traveling compan-

ion: a doctor and an aspiring young writer. Scholars have suggested that there may have been a sexual relationship between the two. Byron rented Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva for the summer. Soon. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Godwin, and Claire Clairmont rented the nearby Villa Chapuis. Byron was clearly impressed by Shelley's literary talents, and the two became lifelong close friends. The fickle Byron now seemed to find Polidori's presence embarrassing,

and Polidori often felt excluded and inadequate. Byron began teasing Polidori about his writing aspirations and referred to him as "Polly Dolly." As Byron resumed a sexual relationship with Claire, Polidori spent more and more time with Mary, upon whom he seems to have developed a crush.

It was an unusually rainy, gloomy summer, and Byron suggested they each write a ghost story in competition. Inspired by Byron's unfinished "The Burial: A Fragment," Polidori wrote The Vampyre. This short novella focuses on a young man who meets an older man in Europe who subsequently dies. When the younger man returns home to England, he encounters his dead friend alive again, wooing—and eventually killing—the younger man's sister. Polidori clearly modeled his antagonist on Byron himself: handsome and

VAMPYRE: A Tale. LONDON: PRINTED FOR SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES, PATERNOSTER-ROW. [Entered at Stationers' Hall, March 27, 1819.]

THE VAMPYRE; A TALE, 1819 | WIKIPEDIA

charming, but also arrogant and cruel; sexually voracious, using and then discarding "lesser" men and women.

Tired of his protégé, Byron dismissed Polidori at the end of the summer. Polidori eventually returned to England, unhappily practicing medicine while continuing to write essays, poems, and a novel. The Vampyre was published in 1819. Polidori earned a small place in literary history, transforming the folklore village

vampire into the figure that we recognize today: an aristocratic fiend who preys among high society. Pop culture scholar Christopher Frayling called Polidori's tale "the first story successfully to fuse the disparate elements of vampirism into a coherent literary genre." It has been very influential on almost all subsequent vampire literature, including Bram Stoker's 1897 Dracula.

Two years later, Polidori drove his carriage into a tree. There is evidence that he had gambling debts that he could not honor, and that he committed suicide by drinking prussic acid before the accident; but when he died several days later, the coroner's report stated natural causes. He was 25 years old.

THE ARCTIC

THE NOVEL FRANKENSTEIN BEGINS AND ENDS IN THE ARCTIC. HERE ARE SOME TERMS USED IN THE PLAY:

THE NORTH POLE – was a great mystery at the time of the play and the novel. Between 1478 and 1816 there were more than 50 expeditions to the region. Frederick Cook thought he reached the pole in 1908, and Robert Peary in 1909, but both were mis-



taken. Ralph Plaisted and Arthur Aufderheide were the first to reach the North Pole across the surface of the ice, via snowmobile, in 1968.

THE MAGNET OF THE POLE ... THE SECRETS OF ITS UNKNOWN GRAVITY Because the poles are

located at the earth's axis, where the diffusive effect of rotation is least prevalent, the pull of gravity is stronger at the poles than it is elsewhere.

THE ARCTIC OCEAN – stretches from the northern coasts of Europe and Asia over the North Pole to the northern coast of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. There are 17 other smaller seas in the region.

PACK ICE – is sea ice that is not landfast: it floats and is mobile.

NORTH PASSAGES – For centuries, explorers sought a west-bound trade route from Europe to Asia. The first complete journey of the Northwest Passage, from Greenland, north of Canada, to Alaska, did not occur until 1906. Meanwhile, other explorers sought a Northeast Passage from Norway, north of Russia, to Alaska, which was achieved in 1878. Because of global warming, both of these routes are much more navigable today.

THE AURORA BOREALIS – Auroras are the result of disturbances in the magnetosphere (the space surrounding the Earth's atmosphere where electrically charged particles are affect-

ed by the earth's magnetic field) caused by the solar wind (the stream of charged particles emitted by the Sun). These disturbances create dynamic patterns of brilliant lights that appear as curtains, rays, spirals, or flickers covering the entire night sky. The Aurora Borealis is the aurora of the North Pole.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

What makes a human different from an animal? How do you define humanity?

What do you already know about the story of *Frankenstein*?

AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

Did Frankenstein have an obligation to help his creation? Why or why not?

How does what is happening in Mary's novel reflect what is happening in her life?

In the play, what significance is there in which of Mary's friends plays which specific character from the novel?

Mary Shelley was one of the earliest writers of science fiction. What books would you recommend to her from after her death in 1851?

If the Creature had been treated more kindly, how do you think he might have behaved differently?

How important is human connection and companionship to someone's well-being? Using the Creature, Victor, Elizabeth, Henry, and the Delancey family, how does the story illustrate this idea in different ways?

Discuss the terms "halo effect" and "pretty privilege." How do these concepts relate to the play and to Frankenstein's creation?

What would Mary Shelley (or her character Victor Frankenstein) think about our scientific advancements of today?

Why do you think Victor doesn't give the Creature a name? Why do you think Mary Shelley didn't give the Creature a name?



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WRITING PROMPTS

Imagine that Victor Frankenstein has brought his Creature to life today. Write a short story from the Creature's perspective. Would your Creature's gender be binary or non-binary? In today's world, how would they find food? How would they learn language? Would they, like Mary Shelley's Creature, be shunned? Or would they find friends?

The characters in the play are having a competition to write the scariest story. Write your own horror story or play and compare with your friends to see whose is the scariest.

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects--scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performances of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not?

WALTER BAZIAK, HAMILTON GILLETT, MATTHEW HARRINGTON, AND FREDERICK FARRAR IN THE IRT'S 1987 PRODUCTION OF FRANKENSTEIN, ADAPTED BY TOM HAAS AND ROBERT GROSS. PHOTO PROVIDED BY INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE



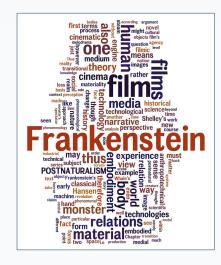
ACTIVITIES

BEFORE THE PLAY

DRAWING

Have students draw or make a collage of their individual images of Frankenstein's Creature. They might be inspired by one of the many movie versions, or they might use their imaginations. Compare and discuss these images. How are they similar? How are they different? What underlying ideas does each different Creature demonstrate? After

seeing the play, do the exercise again. How do the students see the Creature differently? How is he the same? How has the play challenged the students' preconceptions about the Creature?



VOCABULARY

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein uses a sophisticated vocabulary. How many of these words do your students already know? How many words can they decipher the meaning using similar words or roots, prefixes, and suffixes? Have a student who knows the meaning of a word use it in a sentence, and see if the class can figure out the meaning from context.

discomfiting unhallowed celestial untoward immutable inexorable pallid sutured how hull keel stern maw imbibe insurrection morgue mortuary desiccation

minutiae causation denizen slaughterhouse sepulcher desecration begrudge sequestered inert unassailable unsurmountable emaciated elusive articulate abomination subside aberration precipitous

archaic expansive requiem desolation celestial forage differentiate dulcet faculty express apprehension lament annihilation temper incarnate aught odious malice

firmament negligence inexorable henceforth detritus unsounded buffeted concussive inundation cleaves explication profane tarry abhorrent volition tundra

STUDY GUIDE: FRANKENSTEIN | 2024

AFTER THE PLAY

ACTIVITIES

INVENTION

Create your own scientific invention. If you had the resources, what would you create? What would its purpose be? Draw or describe your invention in detail, or better yet, build it (or build a model). How would it work? How much would it cost? Would it be marketable?

VENN DIAGRAM

Read Mary Shelley's original novel and then watch a movie or TV adaptation. Using the play as a third version, make a triple Venn diagram that compares and contrasts these three different tellings of the same story.

TWO DECADES

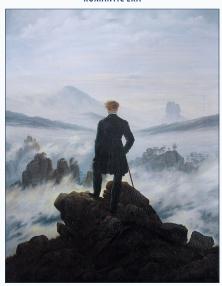
Divide the class in two. Have half of them research Europe in the 1790s, when Frankenstein takes place. Have the other half research Europe in the 1810s, when the novel was written. Have students individually or in small groups look at politics, economics, war, history, fashion, design, art, literature, music, the Age of Enlightenment vs. the Romantic Era. Have each group create their own bulletin board display. Afterwords, compare and contrast the two displays. How did the world change in this relatively brief span of time?

AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT



THEOBALD VON OER'S THE WEIMAR COURT OF THE MUSES, A TRIBUTE TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND WEIMAR CLASSICISM

ROMANTIC ERA



CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH'S WANDERER ABOVE THE SEA OF FOG, PAINTED IN 1818, THE YEAR MARY SHELLEY PUBLISHED FRANKFNSTEIN