



Hampstead Stage Company
a not for profit organization

Frankenstein Study Guide

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The Hampstead Stage Company
Proudly Presents
Frankenstein
A Study Guide

For use with the Theatrical Production by The Hampstead Stage Company
Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director
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Frankenstein

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Education Director's Welcome

Thank you so much for bringing Hampstead Stage Company to your students!

The following guide and lesson plans supplement our performance of *Frankenstein*. Please note, no formal preparation is required for seeing our shows, but we hope that these educational materials will help inspire your students to continue learning about Mary Shelley and classic literature.

We hope you enjoy them just as much as we enjoyed creating them for you!

Sincerely,

Amanda Pawlik

Education Director

Hampstead Stage Company



About Hampstead Stage Company

We are a nationally touring educational theatre that brings high quality, professional performances to schools, libraries, and communities all over the 48 contiguous states (everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska!). The Hampstead Stage Company's goal is to bring great books to life through live theatre; sparking an interest in reading, and creating a new way for audiences to use their imaginations and engage with the world.

Our production of *Frankenstein* is in our Signature Series, which brings to life literature for grades 7-12. With this series, we hope to continue educating not just about classic literature, but also different styles of theatre. Those students who may have seen a Hampstead performance for grades K-8, will now have the opportunity to continue learning about theatre by seeing a new style of performance. In this series, we select works that ask big questions, honoring the potential of all young adults to seek out the answers to these questions and use them to grow and, hopefully inspire them to make the world a better place.

The Hampstead Stage Company got its name from our founders, who came to America from the Hampstead area of London, England to pursue their dreams. Since its inception, our company has grown into one of the largest educational touring companies in the nation. We have performed for over twenty million audience members!

Our educational tours run year-round and are performed by two professional actors, each playing multiple roles. Our scripts are original adaptations, based directly on literary classics. Our shows run approximately one hour, including a question and answer session after the performance. We travel to your space, and bring our own sets and costumes; designed using extensive historical research. Our productions are flexible enough to fit into any assembly/performance space.



The Hampstead Stage Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All HSC study guides and supporting lesson plans and activities are available to download for free from our website!

Contact: Anna Robbins, Company Manager: info@hampsteadstage.org
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About the Author

Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley was born Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin on August 30, 1797. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was an intellectual, writer, and noted advocate for women's rights, with her famous manifesto, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Sadly, Mary never knew her mother as she died due to complications from childbirth. Her father, William Godwin, was known for his work in political theory, most notably *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). His novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), has often been called the first English detective novel.

When young Mary was four years old, her father remarried to Mary Jane Clairmont. Though not a writer herself, Clairmont took an interest in publishing and Mary's father created M.J. Goodwin Publishing in her name. At the age of eleven, Mary published her first work through this publishing house, a rhymed children's story, "*Mounseer Nongtongpaw; or, the Discoveries of John Bull in a Trip to Paris.*"

The Goodwin household was continuously hosting influential thinkers and writers of the time and intellectual debates and conversation were plentiful. Some noted guests include: literary figures Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth and scientists Humphry Davy and William Nicholson, who both experimented with galvanic electricity (direct current electricity, or electric shock), which would later influence Shelley's *Frankenstein*.



Coming from a family of writers and thinkers, it is no surprise that Mary captured the heart of her future husband, writer Percy Bysshe Shelley. The two eloped when Mary was just 16. From the beginning of their relationship, Percy Shelley encouraged Mary to write. They brought a box of her early writings with them when they eloped and traveled through Europe. Mary Shelley's first adult publication, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), was inspired by this trip.

In the summer of 1816, Shelley began what would become her masterpiece. She and Percy Shelley were vacationing in Switzerland and became neighbors to the writer Lord Byron. During a particularly rainy spell, Shelley, her husband, Lord Bryon and a few other friends were confined in doors. To pass the time, they started to read ghost stories. Lord Byron suggested for fun that they all try to write the scariest ghost story. It was for this challenge that Shelley wrote a short story that would then become the inspiration for her larger novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*.

Frankenstein was first published anonymously in 1818 and many thought that Percy Shelley had written it, since he wrote the book's introduction. The novel soon became a great success, pulling upon the science and curiosities of the time.

While showered with joy and success for *Frankenstein*, Shelley's life was filled with many heartbreaks. Only one of her four children, Percy Florence Shelley, survived into adulthood. Her half-sister, Fanny, committed suicide. In 1822, her husband drowned while out sailing in the Gulf of Spezia, making her a widow at the age of 24. In these times of grief, Shelley often turned to her writing to find solace and to find a means to support herself and her son.

While she is most known for *Frankenstein*, Shelley is also the author of *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), *Falkner* (1837), and *Mathilde* (which was published well after her death in the 1950's). She even wrote two short blank verse



dramas that were adapted from Ovid's *Proserpine* and *Midas*, each featuring short lyrical pieces by her husband. Her novels have received praise from scholars and her non-fiction and travel writings, including *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), are considered some of the best of the genre. In addition to her own work, Shelley supervised the publication of her husband's poems and prose after his death, assuring that he had a secure place in literary history.

Shelley died on February 1, 1851 in her home in London, England. Her impact, however, lives on. Since its publication, *Frankenstein* has inspired many plays, films, and other works of fiction. Included in this list are Richard Brinsley Peak's play, *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein*, which Shelley saw for herself, the 1931 film *Frankenstein* starring Boris Karloff, the 1974 Mel Brooks parody, *Young Frankenstein*, and the 1994 Kenneth Branagh film, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

Plot Summary

Our play opens with shouting and commotion on a ship somewhere in the Arctic Circle. Sailor's voices offstage call that there is a devil on board the ship. The captain of the vessel, Captain Walton, enters frantically searching for this supposed monster. A shadow appears at the edge of the room, but before she can turn and see the shadow, a disheveled man falls into the room from the other direction.

Seeing this man is no threat, Captain Walton calls off his sailor's search. She questions the intruder, and as a last attempt to get him to speak, threatens to leave him out on the ice. The tired and beaten man finally mutters he's a doctor named, Victor Frankenstein. Captain Walton asks Frankenstein why he's in the Arctic. He responds with a quote from the book, *Paradise Lost*. Confused, she asks him what that has to do with his appearance on her ship. Frankenstein exclaims there is a monster on board. Thinking he's just delusional, Captain Walton implores him to share his story with him. The action begins to flashback as Frankenstein starts to tell his story, speaking to the audience.



At the age of eighteen, his world was shattered when his mother became ill and died. We see Frankenstein and Father return home from her funeral service. Frankenstein becomes upset at Father, saying that he could have done more to try and help her. Father asks at what cost. Frankenstein reveals that he will find out when he attends University at Ingolstadt. He also reveals that he had been reading Father's hidden journals, which show his Father's shared interest in giving life back to the dead. Father cautions him and urges him to focus on those who are truly alive, such as Frankenstein's beloved, Elizabeth. Frankenstein rushes off to his room, just as Elizabeth enters.

Father greets Elizabeth, and asks her if she's just as upset as Victor is. We learn that Father and his wife took in Elizabeth as a child, so she was also extremely close with the mother. She says she trusts that he did everything in his power to help. With this reassurance, the father requests Elizabeth to continue consoling his son, and exits.

Frankenstein heads off to college at University of Ingolstadt. He and Elizabeth bid each other farewell, promising many visits and letters. Before leaving, Frankenstein tells Elizabeth he plans to intently study his father's books and journals, fueled by the desire to see his mother again. He states he wants to know if life and death are more connected than previously imagined. Elizabeth worries that Frankenstein will get so caught up in his studies, he will forget about those he loves at home. Frankenstein ensures Elizabeth of his love for her.

The mood and time shifts. Frankenstein is hypnotized by his work and at his wit's end. Elizabeth visits him at Ingolstadt and finds him in distress. He admits his experiments aren't going as he'd hoped and will not reveal the nature of his attempts. Elizabeth is upset by Frankenstein's lack of communication and is disappointed to find him so disheveled. She informs Frankenstein that the headmaster, Professor Kirwin, has granted him permission to take some time away from school to rest his mind. Frankenstein reluctantly agrees he has hit a wall.



Elizabeth examines his books and illustrations. She discovers Frankenstein is trying to bring the dead back to life. Frankenstein delves into his theories as Elizabeth tries to wrap her mind around what he is saying. Thunder crashes, lightning flashes. A bolt of lightning! Frankenstein exclaims that a bolt of lightning straight to the heart of a cold, dead human may just be enough to bring it back to life. Elizabeth says he is not sure if this idea is genius or madness but that he is willing to find out with Frankenstein.

Elizabeth and Frankenstein enter a cemetery carrying shovels. They come upon the grave of a young man who died the day prior. The two begin to dig. They are digging up the body that will be used in their first experiment. They find the coffin, remove the body, and bring it back to the laboratory.

Frankenstein and Elizabeth are found in the laboratory unwrapping the corpse. The body is ravaged with disease. Lightning and thunder continue as Elizabeth checks that everything is in position. Both are shaken with nerves: they are going to bring the dead body back to life. Frankenstein has a surge of excitement and pride. A magnificent bolt of lightning hits. The corpse remains still. The experiment has failed. Frankenstein tells Elizabeth to take the it from his sight. Elizabeth does so. Screams are heard offstage as Elizabeth screams, "It's alive!". The Creature is alive and runs onstage, frightened. Frankenstein tries to calm him, but the Creature grabs Elizabeth. He is hurting Elizabeth. It takes a lot of convincing, but the Creature finally drops her but not before grabbing her arm again. Elizabeth fiercely bats him away and throws Frankenstein's jacket of the Creature's head, confusing him. He flees into the night. Frankenstein realizes he has created a monster.

In the next scene, we see Frankenstein's Creature in the forest looking for food to eat. He innocently notices the bird and is fascinated by everything around him. He comes upon an old man who is blind. The old man is friendly and invites the Creature over to him and gives him something to drink. The Creature tries to imitate the old man and begins



learning how to speak. They share a few laughs. The old man invites the Creature to stay with him and his daughter.

Time has passed. The Creature has learned more words and can now make sentences. The Creature expresses gratitude for the warmth, food, and companionship that the old man has provided. The old man informs the Creature that his daughter, Emily, will return today. He promises that she will be very fond of the Creature. Emily enters exclaiming that there is a monster in the woods. She sees the Creature and informs her father to run away. The old man tries to explain that he is a friend, not the monster that's been sighted. Emily cannot be convinced and the Creature angrily picks her up. He accidentally squeezes her to death. The old man is betrayed exclaiming the Creature truly is a monster. The Creature runs away into the forest.

The Creature, distraught and confused over what has happened, wonders why he is alive and why others are afraid of him. He finds Frankenstein's journal in his coat pocket and realizes that Victor Frankenstein is the one who created him. The Creature vows to find Frankenstein and exclaims that Frankenstein is the one responsible for all the destruction, not him.

Time has passed. We find Elizabeth at home getting ready for a masquerade party. Frankenstein enters. They are unhappy with one another. Elizabeth feels that they did something horrific by bringing the Creature life. Frankenstein ensures her that he is dead. Elizabeth is not convinced as there have been stories of murder and a giant hiding in the forest. She wants Frankenstein to find the journal and fix what he has done. Frankenstein diverts and states he is home for Elizabeth and they can put the whole Creature business behind them. Elizabeth exits to attend the party so Frankenstein can rest.

Frankenstein is alone. Father enters wearing a masquerade mask and cloak. Father consoles a defeated Frankenstein. In a twist, it is revealed that it is the Creature behind the mask. He demands that Frankenstein



create a companion of his own kind to love. He threatens to kill Frankenstein's father if he does not do so within one month. Frankenstein informs Elizabeth that he has to return to the university at once to finish up a last bit of business.

One month later, Frankenstein is working frantically in his laboratory looking for his journal. The Creature appears expecting his companion. Frankenstein ensures him that everything is in place but wants to know where his father is. The Creature states that he has killed Frankenstein's father. Frankenstein has already created the woman Creature but destroys her as the Creature did not hold up his end of the bargain. Elizabeth enters. She does not know how the Creature has progressed and has become a complex being. She discovers the woman that was supposed to be created. Elizabeth tries to show the Creature compassion and offers to try to create another woman. The Creature finds Elizabeth kind. Frankenstein is appalled and a fight ensues. Frankenstein falls unconscious. The Creature strangles Elizabeth to death as Frankenstein comes to. The Creature states he is leaving Europe as there is too much pain and begins to leave Frankenstein to mourn over his losses. Frankenstein exclaims he will follow the Creature to the ends of the earth in order to prevent more destruction.

The scene shifts back to the ship from the beginning. Frankenstein knows that the Creature is there, just out of sight watching them. Walton wants to see the Creature for himself. Frankenstein tells him to run and Walton exits. The Creature appears. He wants to finally know why Frankenstein created him. Frankenstein cannot give him an answer. Frankenstein dies. The Creature exits and flees with Frankenstein's journal in hand.



Settings

The Arctic Circle-Our play opens on Captain Walton's ship in the icy seas of the Arctic Circle.

Geneva, Switzerland-Victor Frankenstein's childhood home.

Ingolstadt -University in Germany, located in the city by the same name. This is where Frankenstein attends school. It is the same university his father attended.

Cemetery: The beginning of Frankenstein's experiment.

Frankenstein's Laboratory -Where Frankenstein creates his Creature and later, the Creature's companion.

The Forest -The forest provides a hiding place for the Creature and is the setting for growth within him. Here, he meets the old man who shows him kindness and helps him learn how to speak. It is also where he meets the old man's son who treats him like he is evil and attacks him.

The action of our play takes place during the early 1800's and late 1700's.

Characters

Captain Walton: Walton is the captain of an Arctic vessel. At the start of the play, the ship has been caught in the ice, unable to move. Walton helps care for Frankenstein and listens to his story.

Sailor: He is greatly disturbed by seeing the figure of the Creature at the start of the play.

Dr. Victor Frankenstein: A man driven by his curiosity to discover the secret of life. He creates a living being in human form.

Father: Frankenstein's father, gives Frankenstein his old text books to take with him to university. Encourages Frankenstein to always keep an open mind.



Elizabeth: Taken in by the Frankenstein's as a young girl. Dr. Frankenstein and she fall in love and together, create the Creature.

The Creature: Frankenstein's creation, some call him a "monster".

The Old Man: A blind character who is the only person to show the Creature kindness. He offers him tea to drink and helps him learn how to speak. The Creature accidentally kills him, not realizing his own strength.

The Young Woman (Emily): The old man's daughter. She has heard stories of a monster in the forest and upon her return home, finds he has been living in her home. The Creature accidentally kills her.

Mary Shelley's Creative Influences: Science, Philosophy, and Literature of her Time

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is very much a reflection of its time. The following theories and terms are helpful in further appreciating Shelley's masterpiece.

Science

The Royal Humane Society (1774) – This Society was started by two doctors -William Hawes and Thomas Cogan with the purpose of publishing information on how to resuscitate those who had drowned. There was an annual procession of those who had been saved by the Society's methods. These successful recoveries may have fueled the anxiety of the time that one could never be truly sure if a person was dead or not. The Society still exists today and gives honor and recognition to those who have saved (or bravely tried to save) someone's life.



Incomplete vs. Absolute Death -During Shelley's time there was a belief that the only way a person could be truly classified as dead was if their body had begun decaying. Because there were instances, such as drowning, where people seemed to have died and then were brought back to life, there was a belief that death was something that could be "cured". There was also a great interest in physical states such as sleeping, fainting, and coma where a person appears to be dead, but can be woken up.

Galvanism -Luigi Galvani, an Italian physician and physicist, found that frogs' legs moved as if they were alive when touched with a spark of electricity. Galvani's nephew, **Giovanni Aldini**, also a physicist, took Galvani's discoveries a step further and attempted to reanimate the bodies of hanged criminals using electric currents. He found some success when experimenting on the body of George Forester (a criminal who had murdered his wife and children). Aldini found that when an electric current was applied to his dead body, Forester's eye twitched, his legs moved, and his clenched fist raised in the air.

Philosophers

John Locke: In his, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke discussed his theory of **tabula rasa** that says when we are born our minds are like a blank slate and it is our experiences in the world that shape who we are.

Jacques Rousseau: Rousseau believed that our minds are not blank slates entirely but that we come into the world with two main instincts: **self-preservation** and **compassion**. People naturally have the instinct to be good, it is the corrupting influence of society that causes someone to stray from this.



Literature

Gothic Style

- Popular 1798-1832
- Features intense emotion
- Shows nature as a powerful and destructive force
- Weather or atmosphere used to depict mood
- Evokes terror or horror

Romantic Style

- Popular 1798-1832
- Shows fascination with the grotesque, bizarre, and the supernatural
- Emphasizes feeling over thinking
- Emphasizes intuition and imagination
- Concern for individual experience's rather than society
- Features a belief in the innate goodness of people
- Shows nature as healing force

Epistolary Novel/Story

- A novel or story told through a series of letters, and sometimes other documents such as diary entries.

Frame Story

- A unifying story in which one or more stories are told.
- Shelley's *Frankenstein* is often appreciated for the intricate way in which the stories are layered. The frame is Captain Walton's letters to his sister. Within this story, Walton tells Frankenstein's story. Within Frankenstein's story, we also hear accounts from the Creature as he speaks to Frankenstein as well as other characters such as Elizabeth and Frankenstein's father through their letters to him.



Preshow Discussion Questions and Introduction

The following questions serve as a guide for getting students excited about seeing the performance and provide background information for watching the show.

Today we are going to see a performance of Frankenstein by Hampstead Stage Company.

- Has anyone read the book or seen a movie version of this story? If so, what do you remember most about it?
- If time is available, share the philosophies of John Locke and Jacques Rousseau (provided on page 13 of this guide). Both philosophies raise the question of **nature vs. nurture**. Ask students → **Do you agree that a person is born inherently good and it is their experiences in the world that make them stray from this?** If so, **who is responsible if this person commits a crime?** Share with students that this is a question they will see explored in Hampstead Stage's production of *Frankenstein*. Encourage them to look for these moments in the play.
- Does anyone know who Mary Shelley is?

If students are not familiar with Mary Shelley, let them know:

- Mary Shelley was born in 1797 in London, England
- She wrote the story of *Frankenstein* at the age of 19!
- Frankenstein was written as part of a friendly challenge to see who could write the scariest ghost story. While watching the performance, see if you can notice what makes the story of *Frankenstein* so frightening.



Post Show Discussion Questions

- Have students share general reactions to the performance
- For those who have read (or are reading) *Frankenstein*:
 - How did the performance capture Shelley's use of nature and the atmosphere to establish mood?
 - How do we see Shelley's frame story in the play (the opening and closing scenes with Captain Walton)?
 - How is it different seeing the story performed vs. reading it? Was there anything that stood out to you more seeing it in the play?
 - What were some differences between the performance and the book? Why do you think the playwright choose to make those changes?
- Referring to the philosophies of John Locke and Jacques Rousseau (provided on page 13 of this guide), → **Do you agree that a person is born inherently good and it is their experiences in the world that make them stray from this? If so, who is responsible if this person commits a crime?** What moments from the play help to support your answer?
- The full title of Shelley's novel is *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. In Greek Mythology, Prometheus creates humans out of clay. He steals fire from the gods to help his creations stay warm and survive. With this fire, also comes the wisdom for men and women to care for themselves and grow strong. Prometheus is severely punished for this action. Why do you think Shelley chose to include Prometheus in the title of *Frankenstein*? Do you see any similarities between the story of Frankenstein and the myth of Prometheus?



- Are there any other questions you have about the play or theatre that the actors did not get to answer?
 - Hampstead Stage loves to receive letters and emails! If students have questions or more comments they would like to share, they are encouraged to write to us! All of our contact information may be found on our website.

Lesson Plans

We have prepared the following lesson plans for those who wish to expand upon seeing our performance in the classroom. These activities may be done either before or after seeing the performance. Teachers are encouraged to modify as needed for the needs of their students. A summary of the lesson plans is provided below. The full lesson plans may be downloaded for free from our website.

Grades 7-9

Creating Gothic Soundscapes→

This interactive workshop teaches students about the Gothic literary style and its use of weather and atmosphere to set the mood of a story. To further explore just how powerful these elements can be, students will learn how to create soundscapes (stories using just sound) using their voices and bodies to bring to life a passage from *Frankenstein*.

Grades 10-12

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night -Writing a Gothic Horror Story→

In the spirit that led Mary Shelley to write her masterpiece, *Frankenstein*, students are invited to write their own horror stories using the gothic and romantic literary styles as inspiration.