Novel   ☠ Horror

Frankenstein

Author	Year Published	Original Language
Mary Shelley	**1818**	**English**

OVERVIEW

Journey of Man and Monster

Current depictions of Victor Frankenstein and his creation are often simplified into caricatures of the mad scientist and his monster. But the novel, originally titled *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus,* is far more complex. As the parallel stories of Victor and the monster unfold, distinctions blur between man and monster.

Victor Frankenstein

Victor Frankenstein grows up idealistic and passionate about science.

He enters university to achieve scientific greatness and becomes obsessed with creating life.

When he succeeds in animating the monster, Victor is overwhelmed and flees in disgust.

When he refuses to create a mate for the monster, Victor must watch as his loved ones are killed.

CURIOSITY

IDEALISM

DISILLUSIONMENT

LOSS

The Monster

Left to wander the countryside after his creation, the monster becomes fascinated by the De Lacey family.

Secretly watching the family, the monster grapples with topics like self-awareness and the meaning of life.

Despite protecting the De Laceys and even saving a young girl, the monster is repeatedly rejected.

With no place in society and no companion, the monster vows to destroy Victor and himself.
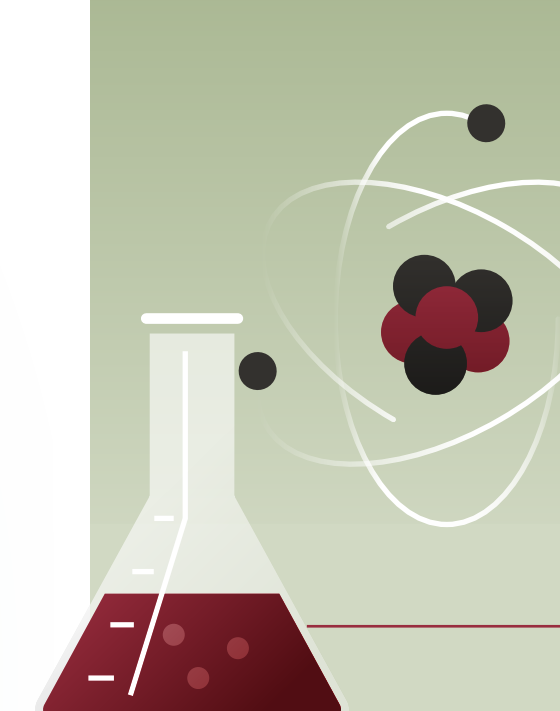
⊙ Context

Romantic Movement

Mary Shelley's work embodied Romanticism, which expressed itself in literature through an emphasis on the emotional, individual, and imaginative. Shelley's *Frankenstein* was foremost among Romantic works that explored horror and the supernatural.

Scientific Idealism

Shelley's description of the monster coming to life was heavily influenced by the science of the day. Her husband, Percy, and fellow writers were fascinated by the experimental use of electricity on dead bodies, and Victor exemplifies Europe's revived interest in science.

Frankenstein by the Numbers

#1
Considered by many as the first true science fiction novel

> 130
Films inspired by *Frankenstein*

> 25
Languages that the book has been translated into, including Arabic, Basque, and Urdu

21
Mary Shelley's age when *Frankenstein* was published

✏ Author

Surrounded by famous figures (a philosopher father, feminist mother, and poet husband) Mary Shelley found recognition of her own as a skilled writer. Intelligent and headstrong, she married as a teenager and later persevered through the deaths of her husband and several children to publish works of fiction, criticism, and poetry. *Frankenstein* was initially published anonymously in 1818, and her name was added in 1823.
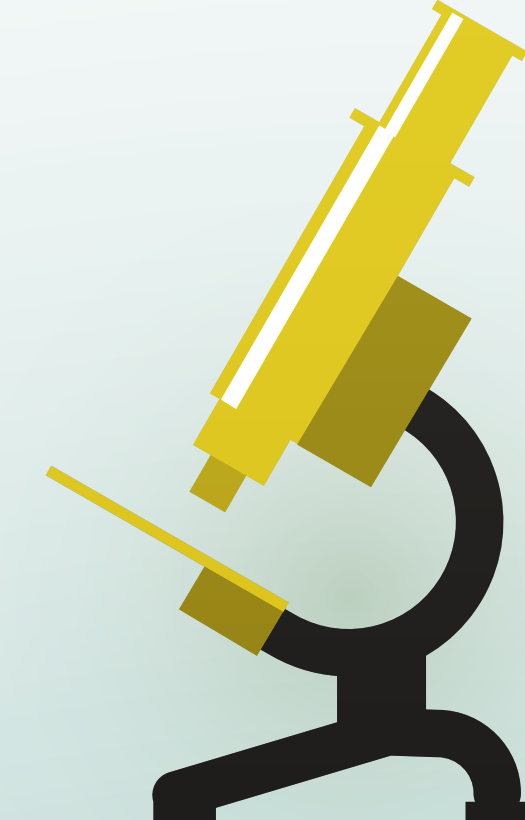
MARY SHELLEY
1797–1851

👥 Main Characters

✗ = Killed by the Monster

Robert Walton
Arctic explorer; records Victor's story

Victor Frankenstein
Protagonist; the monster's creator

The Monster
Victor's creation; brought to life by science

Henry Clerval ✗
Victor's closest friend and confidant

Elizabeth ✗
Victor's childhood sweetheart and betrothed

*H*ow dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

Victor Frankenstein, Chapter 4

■ Course Hero