

# Frankenstein narrative



Mary Shelley was born on August 30th, 1797, in London.

Her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were two very influential people of this era. Her mother was a renowned woman's rights activist and her father was a distinguished philosopher and historian. Due to her father's fame, many prominent writers, philosophers and poets visited their house, with Shelley joining in conversation, possibly influencing her. At the age of sixteen Shelley runs away to live with the poet Percy Shelley, disowning her parents in the process. Whilst with Percy, they went to stay with the poet Byron at his house in Switzerland, where a challenge was set, who could write the scariest story. Shelley was inspired by nightmares of her dead half-sister coming back to life, these could have also included Percy's late wife.

Mary married Percy after his wife died, leaving two children, but the first died a few weeks later. Percy later drowned when Mary was twenty-four, leaving her as a single mother. Due to all the tragedies in her life, Shelley almost committed suicide, and this is reflected in the book, giving a tragic and depressing side to the novel. The book's subtitle was that of a famous Greek myth about a God called Prometheus, who gave the secret of fire to humans. The book subtitle being 'The Modern Prometheus', just as Prometheus was punished for trying to make human beings like gods, chained to a rock, being endlessly punished by the other gods, Frankenstein, who attempts to make himself a god by creating a new kind of man, finds himself emotionally tortured, not by god, but by his own monstrous invention as it kills everyone he loves. The novel Frankenstein has three different narrators throughout the novel, Robert Walton, the captain of a ship heading for the North Pole.

Victor Frankenstein the creator of the monster and finally the monster itself. Mary Shelly uses Walton's letters to his sister to tell the story from his point of view and that of Victor and the monster. They all tell the story, and give the reader different insights, which is what makes the book very unique. I think this is very effective because it can make the reader feel different emotions for each character. An example of this is when Victor Frankenstein tells us his own story.

It makes the reader feel more sympathetic towards him because the reader experiences the tragedies and heartache that Frankenstein feels. We can also see this in the monster, seeing that when he is narrating, the reader understands the emotions that the monster is feeling, when he is talking about how lonely he is. This technique is very effective in Mary Shelley's narrative and helps the reader to get more into the novel. Chapter five begins with a description of the weather, it is a 'dreary night,' the rain 'pattered dismally' and this immediately sets the scene. Frankenstein is about to bring his creation to life and is dreading the moment.

Mary Shelly makes the description of the weather fit his mood. When the creature does come to life Victor talks of it as a 'catastrophe'. She describes all the positive characteristics such as "beautiful, limbs in proportion, lustrous black and pearly whiteness". She then contrasts them to the negative aspects, "horrid, yellow skin, watery eyes, dun-white sockets and straight, black lips"; making them even more vivid and gruesome.

Other words such as "horror, wretch, hideous and demonical" are also used to paint a picture of Victor's creation. Using contrasts in this way Mary Shelly

helps the reader to create a more detailed picture of the creature in their minds. Victor's creation is hideous and a long way from the scientific phenomena he had wanted, ' now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. ' The build up of atmosphere can make the climax of horror even more spine chilling and petrifying.

With the build up of atmosphere, the reader feels involved when the action reaches a pinnacle. In Frankenstein whenever a loved one is lost or there is an encounter with the monster, the weather is always dark and stormy. " The darkness and storm increased every minute and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head". This event takes place when Victor is in Geneva, and the description of the pending weather conditions are told to the reader before there is any mention of the monster.

This leads the reader to a conclusion that something horrific is imminent, building up tension and involving the reader's imagination to predict what is going to happen next. There are many reasons why Mary Shelley's Frankenstein was so riveting to read when first published back in 1818. One of the main reasons why the early audience in 1818 found it so spellbinding was that many scientists of the time were trying to bring the dead back to life, with a new-found invention, electricity. The general public followed every breakthrough and discovery in this new scientific era. One scientist named Erasmus Darwin had made a statement that in fact the dead could be brought back to life if the correct techniques were used. Taking this claim one step further, Luigi Galvani revived some dead tissue using electricity.

The scientists of this period were discovering how the blood circulates in the human body and how the nervous system works. One of the main theories why electricity could bring dead humans back to life was because the 'synaptic nerves' send electrical messages around the body. People of that time were also deeply religious. The suggestion that human beings could have the same power as God, i. e.

give life to the dead was seen as outrageous. This appalled the church, as it was seen as a threat to God's authority. This could fascinate the religious people of the time, as it gave a second perspective to life, intriguing and inspiring them to read Shelley's novel. During the 19th century, women's rights were still scarce; hence Shelley's mother's campaigning for women's rights. This meant that women authors were regarded as inferior to male authors. This discrimination meant that Shelley didn't put her name to her book for thirteen years, in case of a revoke from the publishers.

This could also be why all of the narrators in Frankenstein were male, although we cannot be sure about this. The book has been so popular for nearly 190 years because the scientific knowledge to bring the dead back to life is still non-existent. However recent experiments have brought a dog back to life, which had been clinically dead for three hours. Using electrical impulses, scientists were able to 're-boot' the dog's nervous system and brain. There are still many moral issues surrounding bringing the dead back to life, even if it is as much church related; ethically many see it as the incorrect thing to do.

This moral issue is also brought up in experiments into stem cell research. The scientists plan to place human DNA into animal donors to produce stem cells. These stem cells can supposedly cure many diseases that would otherwise be difficult to treat. The main message of the book is a warning of what would happen if someone tried to use God's powers in an inappropriate way. It is also a warning to scientists and inventors of new technology today and back in the nineteenth century.

The novel shows them what could happen if they start giving life, to what shouldn't be given life, or if they don't fully understand the consequences or side effects. Shelley also gives out the message that death is the end and we should accept that and not try to bring people back to life, just for the selfishness of others. Also the book reveals smaller messages such as don't judge people by their appearance and we should try and learn to accept misfits. This last message is especially relevant in today's modern society.

People are constantly being judged by their outward appearance, whether it is their sex, race or if they have disabilities. I found this novel very depressing, as there was constant death and discrimination. Victor starts off with good intentions, but all backfires when his toils have been revealed. I also feel that you relate to Victor's loneliness, especially when he has worked for years on this single experiment, and it all goes tragically wrong. Although Frankenstein's monster was the person killing all these innocent people, I feel that he was the victim.

This is because he is classed as a misfit of society, he can't relate to anyone and is being constantly discriminated against.