

## FAST FACTS

# Author's Works and Themes: Frankenstein

"Author's Works and Themes: Frankenstein." Gale, 2019, [www.gale.com](http://www.gale.com).

## Writings by Mary Shelley

- History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, with Letters Descriptive of a Sail Round the Lake of Geneva and the Glaciers of Chamouni[with Percy Bysshe Shelley] (nonfiction) 1817
- *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. 3 vols. [anonymous] (novel) 1818; revised edition, 1831
- Valperga; or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. 3 vols. [as "The Author of Frankenstein"] (novel) 1823
- Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley [editor] (poetry) 1824
- *The Last Man*. 3 vols. [as "The Author of Frankenstein"] (novel) 1826
- *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*. 3 vols. [as "The Author of Frankenstein"] (novel) 1830
- *Lodore* [as "The Author of Frankenstein"] (novel) 1835
- *Falkner* [as "The Author of Frankenstein"] (novel) 1837
- The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. 4 vols. [editor] (poetry) 1839
- Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843. 2 vols. (travel essays) 1844
- The Choice: A Poem on Shelley's Death (poem) 1876
- Tales and Stories by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (short stories) 1891
- Proserpine and Midas: Two Unpublished Mythological Dramas by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (plays) 1922
- *Mathilda* (novella) 1959
- The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. 3 vols. (letters) 1980-83; also published as Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 1994.
- The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844. 2 vols. (journals) 1987

## Major Themes

Critics identify the responsibility and consequences of human creation as the central theme of *Frankenstein*, signified by Shelley's reference to the mythical Prometheus in the novel's subtitle and by the opening epitaph, from Book Ten of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the classic epic poem which recounts the biblical story of creation. Both allusions invoke characters who attempt to steal knowledge and violate the natural order, and in the process bring about their own destruction. Frankenstein's negation of the role of woman in giving birth irrevocably disrupts conventional family and societal relationships. Critics trace this theme to Shelley's own life, which was profoundly affected by her ambivalence about childbirth. Frankenstein's concurrent tampering with the

sacred finality of death further illustrates the disastrous consequences of meddling in the mysteries of human existence. The motif of the *doppelgänger*, or double, is also prominent in *Frankenstein*. The doctor and his monster represent doubles of one another and their relationship mirrors that of the head and the heart, or the intellect and emotion. In this context, the monster's actions have been viewed as manifestations of the doctor's--and Shelley's--

repressed desires. Some critics have speculated as to whether Shelley's omission of a name for the creature was intentional, noting that the result--that casual readers and filmgoers refer to the monster, not the doctor, as Frankenstein--has served to underscore the story's theme of blended identities.

## Paper Topics

- Compare the conflict of man versus nature as portrayed in *Frankenstein* with modern-day concerns about gene therapy and genetic cloning.
- Explore the concept of the *doppelgänger*. Explain how the characters of Dr. Frankenstein and the monster mirror each other.

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