

HORROR
a story that
frightens, shocks,
or disgusts

Drama

FRANKENSTEIN

The story of a monster

Based on Mary Shelley's classic novel | By Spencer Kayden



Characters

Circle the character you will play. *Indicates large speaking role

*Stage Directors 1, 2 & 3 (SD1, SD2 & SD3)

*Mary Shelley, the storyteller

*Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist

*Creature, Victor Frankenstein's monster

Father, Victor's father

Elizabeth, Victor's fiancée

Mr. De Lacey, an elderly blind man

Agatha, De Lacey's daughter

Felix, De Lacey's son

Sailors 1, 2 & 3

Captain Robert Walton,

an explorer

As You Read Who is the monster in this story?

Scene 1

SD1: From the darkness comes a deafening crash of thunder and a flash of lightning.

SD2: The curtain rises, and a spotlight reveals Mary Shelley, our storyteller, standing in a corner.

Mary Shelley: Long ago, in the German town of Ingolstadt [ING-guhl-shtaht], a young scientist had a dream.

SD3: The stage lights slowly come up on Victor Frankenstein standing in his cluttered laboratory. Candles struggle to illuminate the gloom.

SD1: Victor is surrounded by body parts—legs, arms, heads, eyeballs.

SD2: On the table before him is the body of an enormous man. He is 8 feet tall.

SD3: Shelley slowly walks across the stage. Victor does not see her.

Shelley: For two years, Victor Frankenstein has been collecting bones and organs, stitching together muscles and arteries. He has been constructing this creature from a collection of corpses.

SD1: Rain lashes against the roof.

Shelley: And now, in the dead of night, his quest to create a living human being is nearly complete.

Victor (whispering): Will nature reveal to me the secrets of life?

SD2: The candles flicker.

Victor (louder): If my experiment is a success . . .

SD3: Wind rattles the window.

Victor (very loud): . . . I will be able to bring back the dead!

SD1: Thunder rumbles through the room.

Victor (shouting): And a new species will bless ME as its creator. ME!

SD2: Lightning cracks violently, shaking the table.

SD3: Just then, the creature opens his eyes and parts his lips.

Creature (gasping for breath): Guuuuh!

SD1: The creature's limbs twitch.

SD2: Victor jumps back, a look of disgust on his face.

Victor: Watery yellow eyes, **sallow** skin, misshapen arms and legs . . . You . . . you were supposed to be beautiful . . . but . . .

SD3: Another clap of thunder!

Victor: You are hideous!

SD1: Victor runs out of the room and the lights fade.

Scene 2

SD2: Victor wanders along a dark, empty city street. He is soaked by rain.

Victor (muttering): What have I done?

SD3: He looks up at the black sky.

Victor: So quickly my dreams have turned into a nightmare.

SD1: He continues to walk as the lights brighten—the sun is rising.

SD2: He stops in front of the door of the apartment building where he lives.

SD3: He stares at the door for a few moments. Then he slowly withdraws a key from his pocket and lets himself in.

SD1: Quietly, he closes the door behind him and disappears into the building.

SD2: A minute later, he opens a window on the top floor. Resting his palms on the sill, he drops his head in relief and exhaustion.

Victor: The creature is gone!

Scene 3

Shelley: Months later, Victor is at his family's home in Geneva, Switzerland.

SD3: In a small parlor, Victor sits with his fiancée, Elizabeth, and his father.

Father: Victor, I have terrible news—the worst news ever. Your little brother, William—

SD1: Tears stream down Father's face.

Elizabeth (to Victor): William has been murdered.

Victor: What?! How?

Elizabeth: He wandered off one evening and was later found . . . strangled.

Victor: Who would do such a thing?

Father: Justine, the nanny, was accused of the crime.

Elizabeth: But she is innocent—I am sure of it!

Victor: Where is she now?

Father: She was sentenced to death and executed. But Justine could not have done this. This was the work of a monster!

SD2: Just then, the creature's face appears at the window. Only Victor sees it.

Victor: The eyes! The hideous yellow eyes!

Elizabeth: Eyes? What eyes, Victor?

SD3: Victor rushes to the window, but the face is gone.

Victor: So much death. Is it all my fault?

Elizabeth: How could it be your fault?


Father: Poor Victor. He is mad with grief.



This play is based on a novel by Mary Shelley. Shelley started writing the book in 1816, when she was 18 years old.

The Spark of Life

In the early 1800s, advances in science and technology were changing the way people saw the world. Electricity was a particular fascination. Scientists experimenting with electricity were amazed that dead animals moved when shocked. Were these animals being shocked back to life temporarily? Many wondered if electricity was the spark of life itself. *How might advances in science and technology have inspired Mary Shelley?*



Frankenstein's monster has been depicted in countless movies and TV shows. He is often portrayed as green with bolts through his neck, though Mary Shelley never described him that way.

Very, Very Wrong

Frankenstein makes the creature partly in an effort to do good: He wants to cure disease and help people live longer. Of course, it all goes very, very wrong. *Should scientists conduct research that could lead to harm as well as to good?*

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Scene 4

Shelley: Despair presses on Victor's heart. He roams the mountains above Geneva like a restless ghost.

Victor (*muttering*): My intentions were noble. But I am the author of a terrible evil.

SD1: Just then, Victor sees a large figure approaching at superhuman speed.

Victor (*trembling with rage*): It's you! The **abomination!**

SD2: The creature towers over Victor.

Victor: Monster! Get away from me!

Creature: I have come to ask something of you.

Victor: After what you've done?

Creature: Oh, misery! Even you, my father, hate me.

Victor: I am no father to you. You are a hideous mistake.

SD3: Victor turns to flee, but the creature grabs his arm.

Creature: Listen to my tale before you judge me.

SD1: Reluctantly, Victor nods, and the lights fade.

Scene 5

SD2: The lights come up on a small, cheerful village nestled in a lush green hillside. Men and women go about their chores—sweeping, hanging laundry, chopping wood—as a group of children laugh and play.

SD3: In the distance, snow-topped mountains sweep into the bright-blue sky.

Shelley: The creature's tale begins in the hills of Ingolstadt, after Victor abandoned him.

SD1: The creature stumbles onstage. He approaches the children, who scream and run away.

SD2: Next he walks over to a shepherd, who scoops up two lambs and sprints off in horror.

SD3: One by one, everyone onstage sees the creature and flees, until the creature is completely alone.

SD1: He crawls into a small shack.

SD2: The front walls of the shack and of the cottage beside it lift away.

SD3: The audience now sees the creature peering through a hole into the cottage next door, where a blind old man and his grown children move about.

Shelley: Day after day, the creature watches the family. He learns to speak by listening to them. He grows fond of them and secretly does them favors.

De Lacey: Agatha, dear, could you put another log on the fire, please?

Agatha: Of course, Father.

Creature (*quietly*): Fah-thurrr.

SD1: Agatha opens the front door to find a pile of chopped wood.

Agatha: Felix, what a grand pile of firewood!

Felix: I didn't chop that.

Agatha: Then who did?

De Lacey: It must be our guardian angel.

Creature: Gar-dee-uhn ayn-jell.

Scene 6

Shelley: Months have passed. The creature has learned to speak. He now thinks of the De Laceys as his friends. One day, when Mr. De Lacey is home alone, the creature **musters** the courage to knock on the door.

Creature (*to himself*): The old man cannot see me. Maybe he will not hate me.

De Lacey: Who's there?

Creature: A traveler needing rest.

De Lacey: Please, come in and sit by the fire. What brings you here?

Creature: I am here to visit friends, but they've never met me in person. I fear they will reject me.

De Lacey: Most people are friendly—unless they are blinded by prejudice.

Creature: You are wise and kind.

SD2: He puts a hand on Mr. De Lacey's shoulder.

SD3: Just then, Felix and Agatha arrive home.

Felix: Aaaaaagh!

Agatha: Get away from my father, you monster!

SD1: Felix raises a stick to strike the creature.



When Stan Lee created the Hulk as a Marvel superhero, he was inspired by the creature in *Frankenstein*. What do the two characters have in common?



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good?

SD2: The creature flees the cottage.

Creature: I have no friends. No family. Am I not human?

SD3: He sinks to his knees, his head in his hands.

Creature: Why am I alive?

Scene 7

Shelley: Back on the mountaintop near Geneva, the creature confronts Victor.

Creature: All I wanted was friendship. But all I was given was hate.

Victor: How did you find me?

Creature: I took a coat from your laboratory before I fled. There were papers in the pocket with your name, and I decided to look for you.

Victor: But . . . why did you kill my brother?

Creature: I didn't mean to. I thought he might be my friend because he was too young to have prejudices. When he called me an ogre, I got angry and . . .

Victor: What do you want from me?

Creature: I want you to make me a companion—someone as hideous as I am.

Victor: I will not bring more evil into the world.

Creature: I am evil because I am **shunned** by the entire world! Should I have no chance for joy?

SD1: Victor softens.

Creature: If you make me a companion, we will live far away. We will bother no one.

Victor: I will agree if you promise to leave the human world forever.

Creature: I promise. No one will see us again.

Shelley: The creature speeds off down the mountain, leaving Victor with a heavy heart.

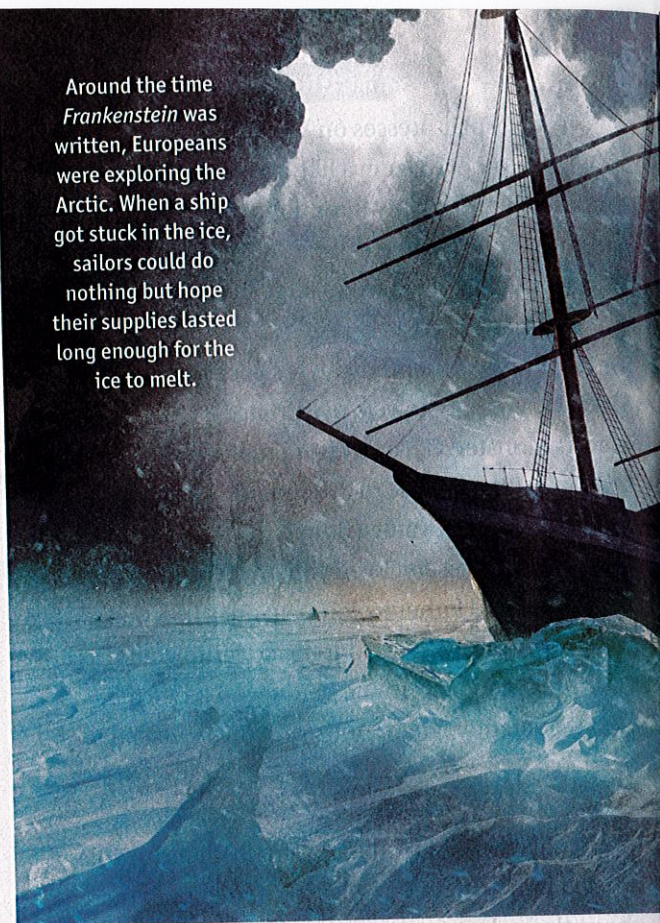
Scene 8

Shelley: Victor travels to a remote island in Scotland and sets up his lab in a small hut. For weeks, he stitches together a new creature.

SD2: Victor looks down at the body on his table.

Victor: Maybe they will truly disappear. . . . But what if they have children? There could be a whole population of monsters.

SD3: Victor looks up and sees the creature in the



Around the time *Frankenstein* was written, Europeans were exploring the Arctic. When a ship got stuck in the ice, sailors could do nothing but hope their supplies lasted long enough for the ice to melt.

doorway, a **ghastly** grin on his face.

Victor: No! I won't do it! I will not unleash more horror on the world!

SD1: Victor tears the body to pieces.

Creature: How dare you!

Victor: I will never make another demon like you!

Creature: You will be sorry. I will have my revenge!

Victor: I am not afraid of you.

Creature: You should be. You are my creator, but I am your master.

Scene 9

SD2: Victor and Elizabeth sit on a sofa at a small inn.

Elizabeth: We are finally married. So why is there sadness in your eyes?

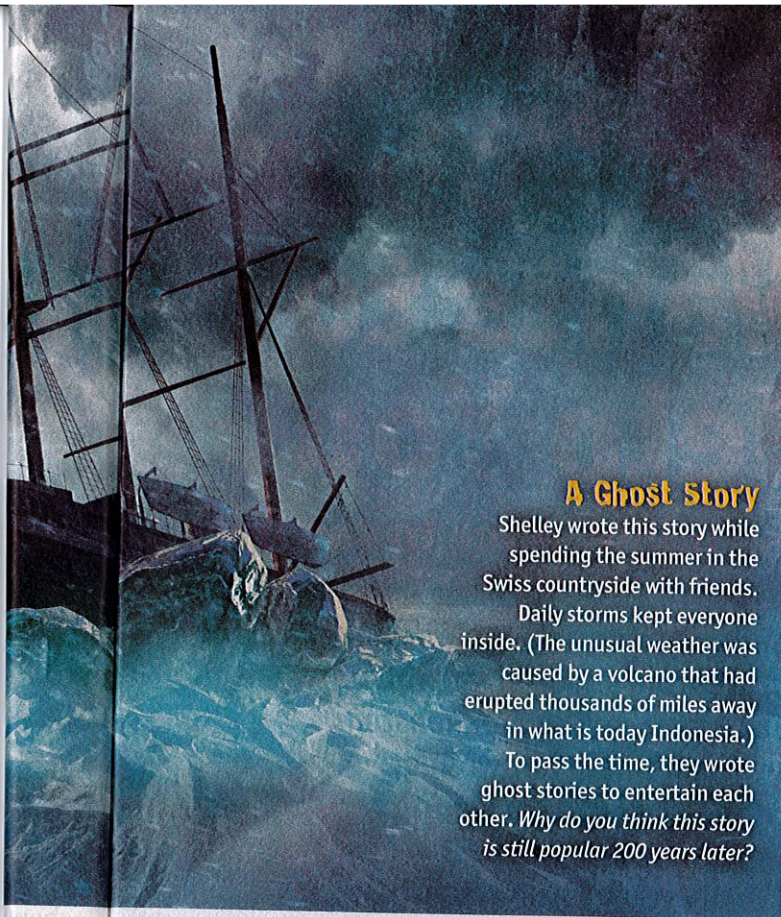
Victor: I'm sorry, darling. It's just . . . there is something I need to tell you, and—

SD3: They hear a rustling sound.

Elizabeth: What was that?

Victor: Stay here.

SD1: Victor grabs a sword and leaves the room.



A Ghost Story

Shelley wrote this story while spending the summer in the Swiss countryside with friends.

Daily storms kept everyone inside. (The unusual weather was caused by a volcano that had erupted thousands of miles away in what is today Indonesia.)

To pass the time, they wrote ghost stories to entertain each other. *Why do you think this story is still popular 200 years later?*

SD2: Elizabeth sits tensely. Suddenly, she turns her head toward a sound in the corner.

SD3: The lights go out.

Elizabeth: Ahhhhhhhh!

Victor (from offstage): ELIZABETH!

SD1: Victor bursts back into the room, but he is too late. Elizabeth has been murdered.

Victor (in shock): No. Oh, no. No, no, NO!

SD2: Victor faints.

Scene 10

SD3: A massive wooden ship rests on the stage, surrounded by ice.

Shelley: Captain Robert Walton and his crew are in the Arctic, searching for a passage to the North Pole.

Sailor 1: Look! Out on the ice!

Captain: What is that?

Sailor 2: It's a dogsled.

Sailor 3: The driver is enormous. He must be 8 feet tall!

SD1: The crew watches, perplexed, as the sled disappears over the horizon.

Sailor 1: Captain, another sled—stranded on that piece of ice, just ahead.

Captain: The driver is unconscious. Quick! Pull him up!

SD2: The sailors drag the man onto the ship.

Sailor 2: He's near death, Captain.

Captain: What is your name, sir?

Victor (mumbling): Victor Frankenstein.

Sailor 3: We must get him warm. Let's take him below.

Scene 11

SD3: Inside the ship's cabin, Victor lies on a bed under a pile of heavy quilts. The captain sits beside him.

Captain: What happened to you?

Victor (weakly): I unleashed . . . terrible evil . . . terrible.

Shelley: Victor tells Captain Walton everything. The captain listens intently.

Victor: . . . and I've been chasing the fiend ever since.

SD1: A spasm of coughing racks Victor's body.

Captain: Rest easy, friend.

Victor: It is my duty to destroy the monster I created. But I am dying. I beg you—if you ever see it, you must kill it, Captain. You must!

SD2: Victor coughs and sputters . . . and dies.

SD3: A groan comes from the corner of the room.

Creature: Noooooo!

SD1: The captain looks up and sees the creature standing in the shadows.

Creature: I came to ask forgiveness. I killed those he loved most and caused him terrible suffering.

Captain: Your remorse is meaningless. He is dead.

Creature: You don't know the misery I have endured. I have only ever desired one thing. And I never got it.

Captain: What was that?

Creature: Love.

SD2: The creature gently puts a hand on Victor's chest.

Creature: But no. The world fed me hate, and hate filled me up. I hated him. I hate myself.

SD3: The creature turns and leaps from the cabin window onto a raft of ice.

Shelley: And with that, Frankenstein's monster is carried away by the waves and lost in the darkness of the sea. ●



This Robot Wants to Help You

(and you might want to say no!)

Today's scientists are working on creating super-smart robots. But after reading *Frankenstein*, I can't help but wonder: **What could go wrong?**

By Kristin Lewis

In the play you just read, Victor Frankenstein creates a man in his laboratory—a sort of artificial human being. Then he abandons “the creature” and eventually tries to kill it.

At first, Frankenstein is so obsessed with achieving his goal of creating life that he doesn't consider the consequences of his actions. As a result of Frankenstein's shortsightedness, a lot of people get hurt—including the creature.

This got me thinking: Could Frankenstein's creature one day exist in the real world? Of course, a human being cannot be cobbled together from body parts and jolted into life. But scientists are developing a powerful technology called artificial intelligence—or AI—that could lead to the existence of very humanlike machines. After reading *Frankenstein* (and probably watching too many movies about evil robots), I can't help but wonder: Is this a good idea?

Fear and Wonder

Artificial intelligence refers to the ability of a machine or a computer program to think and learn like a human. Machines with AI can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as speaking, translating languages, or even making decisions. This technology is already improving our lives in all sorts of ways. For example, Google uses AI programs to recognize your face in a photo and to translate a menu from one language into another, and doctors in hospitals use AI to help identify problems.

Scientists are also working toward building a new type of AI—a type that would be far smarter than humans. The idea of a super-smart artificial being fills me with excitement. It also makes me a little afraid. How will super-intelligent machines change

our lives? Will these changes be for the better or for the worse? Will these machines be sweet like BB-8 from Star Wars? Will they be **benevolent** geniuses like Vision from the Avengers? Or will they turn against us and try to take over the world like Ultron?

These are questions that today's scientists and business leaders are pondering. The famous physicist Stephen Hawking (1942-2018) warned that AI could be the worst invention in human history. He said that AI machines could eventually act on their own. They could change elections or launch weapons. “We cannot know if we will be infinitely helped by AI or . . . destroyed by it,” Hawking said in a 2017 speech.

Another cautionary voice is that of **entrepreneur** Elon Musk. “I'm not against the advancement of AI,” Musk, who is the head of several technology companies, said in an interview. “But I do think we should be extremely careful. We shouldn't be rushing headlong into something we don't understand.”

Big Message

One of the big messages of *Frankenstein* is that we should think through what we want to create before we create it. In a recent tweet about the AI debate, Musk quoted the creature's chilling words to Frankenstein: “You are my creator, but I am your master.”

I do not want to live in a world where the machines we create become our masters.

Do you? ●



Writing Contest

The year is 2050, and a super-intelligent robot has just been created. Should the robot be switched on? Answer from either Frankenstein's or the creature's point of view. Your response may be in the form of a one-page written letter or a one-minute video. Send your entry to **Frankenstein Contest**. Five winners will each get a copy of *Scar Island* by Dan Gemeinhart.

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