

FRANKENSTEIN (1818)

by Mary Shelley

FEATURES AND THEMES OF THE NOVEL

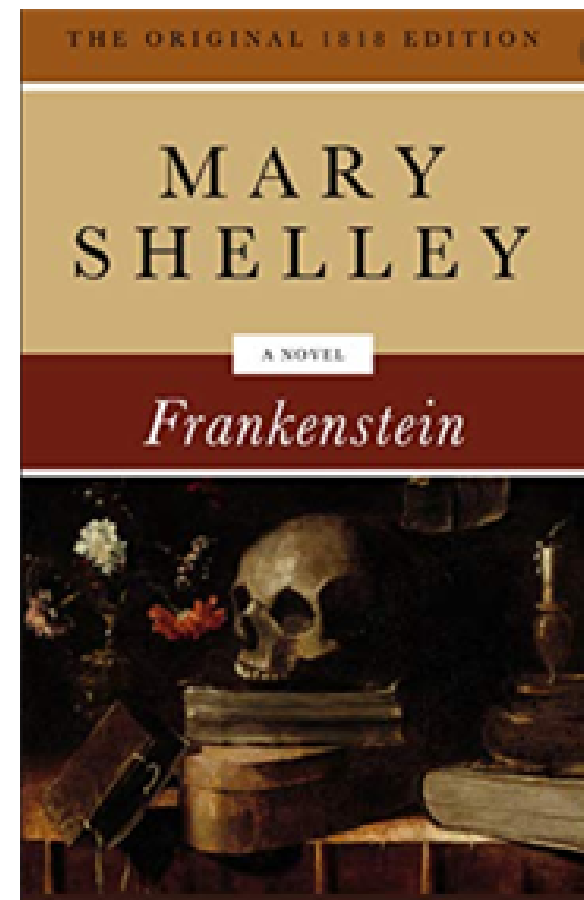
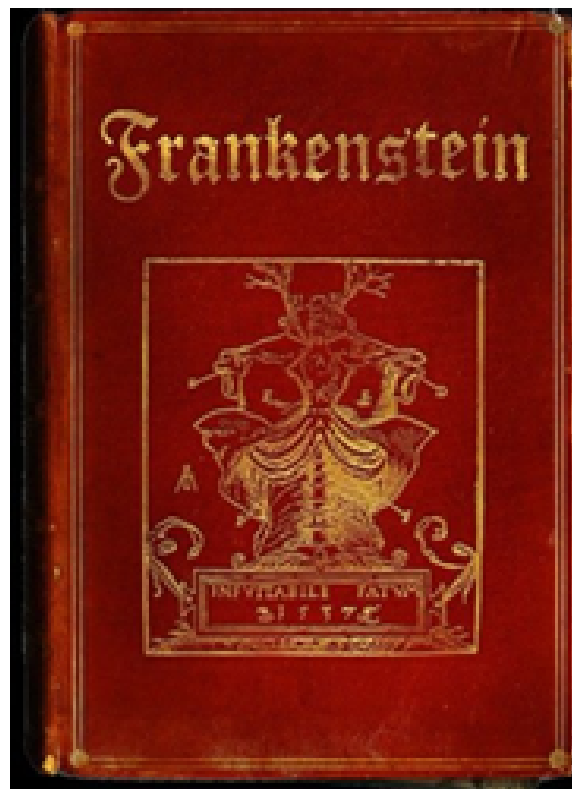
The novel was conceived in 1816 in Switzerland, where the author was spending some time with her husband Shelley and their friend Byron.



Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

They had been reading German ghost stories and they decided to write tales about the supernatural themselves.

Frankenstein was the result of Mary Shelley's efforts.



Frankenstein is narrated in the **first person** by three different narrators.

It starts as an **epistolary novel** in which an English explorer, Walton, describes his experiences in the Arctic to his sister.



He tells her about his meeting with the scientist Frankenstein in his pursuit of the monster he had himself created. There follows a report in Frankenstein's own words of the dreadful story starting with the creation of the monster.



Frankenstein's narration also contain a long written report by the monster himself in which he explains how he came to behave in the way he did.



Gothic elements in *Frankenstein*

This novel may be said to belong to the Gothic tradition of fiction, even if it differs from it in some important respects. ***Frankenstein* is not set in a Gothic castle and it does not deal with supernatural events.** It deals with a scientific experiment (*Frankenstein* is also considered **the first work of science fiction**) and the horror derived from the unexpected outcome.

The Gothic element is to be found in the description of the ugliness of the monster and in the reactions of his creator, in the sense of impending danger (with a lot of suspense), in the dreadful setting and the use of highly emotional language.



SUSPENSE:

feeling of tension and worry about what may happen

Themes of the novel: *Nature and Society*

Is *Frankenstein* a Romantic novel?

The Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is often considered the father of Romanticism. According to him **MAN IS GOOD BY NATURE BUT CORRUPTED BY SOCIETY.**



Frankenstein - Chapter 16

Let's consider the "monster" described in *Frankenstein*. In the extract we have read (from Chapter 16) he appears as an essentially good creature who enjoys the beauties of nature. And when he sees a girl in mortal danger he rushes to help her, then he saves her "*with extreme labour from the force of the current*" of the river.

Well... we can say that he is definitely **good** by nature!

But “*as a recompense*” for saving the girl he is shot by a man (who has judged him by his physical appearance)! So the creature vows “*eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind*”.

He becomes bad only when people (**society**) try to hurt him for no reason other than his ugliness.