

# A Guide for Teachers

October, 2011

Chattanooga  
**YOUTH THEATRE**  
Centre

*We're Live*



by *C. Lewis Tuttle*

Based on the Novel by

*Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*

*Directed by A. Maria Chattin Carter*

**Co-Producers:** Aretha Frankenstein, Dale & Janice Miller,  
Eunice Hoges, Milly Farris



**allied arts**

**the arts**   
*changing lives!*

TENNESSEE ARTS COMMISSION



# The Cast:

## Orange Cast

Dr. Frankenstein..... Savage Glascock, CCS

Creature.....Noah Phillips, CSAS

Elizabeth.....Katie Ward, Notre Dame

Igor.....Charlie Christopher, CCA

Delacey/ Villager.....Anna Strickland, Ooltewah Mid

Priest/ Captain..... Willie Derrick, Soddy Daisy HS

Cleval/Richard/  
Villager#4.....Noah Kominczak, CCA

Felix/  
Grave Digger #2.....Bradley Miller, Home School

Mary/ Grave Digger #1/  
Villager #3.....Breanna Ingram. GPS

Mrs. Frugelheim/  
Justine/ Villager #2.....Amy Hartline, N. Whitfield HS

Young Victor/ Fritz.....Brady Saffles, East Ridge Elem.

Eliza/Frieda.....Andrea Palmer, Home School

Greta/ Villager #1.....Dory Goocher, Home School

Agatha/ Villager.....Cameron Davis, Signal Mtn

Stagemanager.....Jonathan Posey, CCA

## Black Cast

Zeke Cobb, *Heritage High*

Joe McGuire, *Notre Dame*

Alexis Newson, *Ooltewah HS*

Jared Alexander, *Signal Mtn*

Holly Alexander, *Signal Mtn*

AJ Rankin, *Home School*

Jordan Alexander, *Signal Mtn*

Joshua Anderle, *Home School*

Lizzie Ruch, *Central HS*

Skyler Beene, *Hixson Mid*

Mason Carter, *East Ridge Elem*

Elizabeth Van Deusen, *St. Peters*

Lexie DeHart, *Home school*

Hailey White, *CCA*

Stagemanager, *CCA*

### Director's Notes:

When I read Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, I fell in love with the book. I thought it was a great story with a lot of meaning behind it. The fact that society was what shaped this creature into a monster was just so fascinating. The creature wanted to be loved by the one who created him but the creator wanted nothing to do with him. I was heartbroken for the creature. I was resentful of Dr. Frankenstein and could relate to Dr. Frankenstein on wanting to forget that his very huge mistake ever existed but he couldn't, as we can't.

Our play takes a more gentle view of the story Mary Shelley wrote. The play explores the idea of learning in a more civil way, with actual human contact and through the Bible. The creature experiences an unconditional love for a very short time and it makes him long for that love from a mate similar to himself. There is also a change that happens in Dr. Frankenstein when he is left alone. He regrets his actions of leaving the creature to fend for himself once he is put into the same outcast position.

The big themes in the show are that we all need a place to fit in; someone to understand us and not to judge someone just because of their outside appearance. I hope, when you walk away from this show, you will have a different opinion of those you view as different. Deep down we all want the same thing, a place to fit in.

# Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley 1797 ~ 1851

Born to Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin in 1797, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was born to be a writer. Both parents were published writers and philosophers of progressive ideas. Her mother, however, died when Mary was only 11 days old, leaving her father to raise her and her half sister Fanny. William Godwin would remarry in 1801 to Mary Jane Clairmont, giving Mary another sister, Claire, to whom she seems to have been very close. At the age of sixteen, she met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a man she would remain devoted to for the rest of her life. Shelley, being married to another woman, eloped with Mary to France, taking Claire with them. This created a rift between her and her father that was only healed with she and Shelley were married after the death of his first wife in 1816. In that same year, she and Shelley spent time in Geneva with Lord Byron. One rainy evening they sat around the fire reading German ghost stories. It was suggested that each try their hand at writing a supernatural story. It was from this suggestion that the idea of *Frankenstein* first entered Mary's head.

Upon returning to England, Mary completed her manuscript and *Frankenstein* was published in 1818. Mary would write other novels, travel journals and articles for newspapers. She seems to have spent her life on the brink of poverty, Shelley having been virtually disowned by his family for his social and political views. She had several children during her time with Shelley, but only one survived to adulthood. In 1822, Shelley drowned in boating accident in Italy. Though both believed in the free love movement of the time, Shelley seemed adhere to it more in practice than Mary, who seems to have never taken another lover, or husband after Shelley. She spent the rest of her life writing and raising her son Percy Florence. She edited Shelley's poetry and wrote more novels including *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), and *Falkner* (1837).

Though never a hearty person, Mary's last ten years were particularly plagued with illness. She suffered from headaches and occasional paralysis. These were, most likely, symptoms of the brain tumor that would finally take her life in 1851.



Though there has been recent interest in her other works of fiction nothing can compare with her best known work, *Frankenstein*. The literary influences of her life seem to coalesce in this novel. Her father had taken on the job of her early education and had taught her to write by encouraging her to write letters. This style is evident in *Frankenstein* as the novel is a series of extended letters from Captain Walton to his sister, Margaret. Walton's letters to her betray Mary's knack for travel writing, as they are filled with details about his adventures at the Arctic Circle. Her language is almost lyrical, as would befit an author who, as a child knew Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was married to Percy Shelley, and was friends with Lord Byron.

*Frankenstein* Also reveals Mary's early education in the contemporary social and scientific philosophies such as the theories of Erasmus Darwin and her father's ideas of political justice. Her personal life may have also played a role in the creation of the story. Mary had recently lost a baby and the theme of the responsibility and consequences of creating life is prevalent throughout the novel.

*Frankenstein* may have been the perfect storm for Mary Shelley. The novel was conceived at the time of the Gothic movement in literature, on a rainy night, fueled with ghost stories. Whatever the reason, it can't be denied that it earned her a place among the great novelists of English literature.

# From the Playwright

I was first approached to write an adaptation of *Frankenstein* in 1985. I was working with a children's theatre company in California at the time and the Executive Director had wanted to do *Frankenstein* for some time, but couldn't find a stage version suitable for children. At that point, I hadn't done much writing and I was young, so I was too naive to know how hard a task it would be. I started by reading the book, a good place to start if you want to adapt something. I then watch the old *Frankenstein* movies: the original, *Bride of Frankenstein*, and of course, *Young Frankenstein* (because if Mel Brooks could do it, I could too). The images of those movies stuck in my head and gave me a style in which to wrap my script.

Reading the book was a sobering experience. I realized why no one had ever made a faithful adaptation of it. First of all the book starts with a letter written by Captain Walton to his sister. When he meets Dr. Frankenstein, Walton relates to his sister what Dr. Frankenstein says to him. Then Dr. Frankenstein, well into the story, meets the monster on a glacier who then relates to Dr. Frankenstein what has happened to him since his creation, which Dr. Frankenstein tells to Captain Walton, who is writing it home to his sister in a letter. That is a awful lot to get across in a sixty minute play. So like many people before me, I threw a lot of this narration out.

My second problem came with the themes I was most interested in addressing. There are plenty of them: usurping the power of God, the responsibility someone carries for his/her actions, the pain of isolation. Isolation. That one struck a cord. The isolation felt by the monster, first cast out by his creator, then by every other human. This was mirrored by the isolation Dr. Frankenstein imposes upon himself as he obsesses over his experiments to create life, and later when he realizes what he has done. Both the monster and Dr. Frankenstein respond to this isolation in destructive ways, the doctor on himself and the monster on Frankenstein. The monster not only looked like a monster, but acted like one too. I wasn't sure that was the message I wanted to send. Perhaps I was in a happy place in my life at that time, or maybe I wasn't and wanted to be, but I was more interested in creating a monster that looked like a monster, but acted very human.

So, given this, when in the book did he have a chance at redemption? What was the turning point where he gave up his humanity? It seemed to be the moment he enters the blind man, DeLacey's, house and is rejected by him. Before this, the monster has taught himself to speak by listening to DeLacey and his family, then finds books and teaches himself to read. The primary book he reads is *Paradise Lost*. This is a book with a less than gentle vision of God. I decided that, in order for him to understand what it is to be human, he had to interact with someone who has the most noble of human characteristics: the ability to care. So my monster not only meets DeLacey, but spends the winter with him learning to read from the Bible and given guidance as to the interpretation of God within it. From this, my monster draws the same conclusion as Mary Shelley's, but has different actions. Another words, he doesn't feel the need to kill everyone to punish his creator.

Likewise Dr. Frankenstein needs guidance with the responsibilities he must face. I therefore, allowed him to marry Elizabeth (who in the book is killed by the monster on her wedding night), and she makes him face up to what he has done and make it right. Frankenstein creates a mate for the monster and brings it fully to life instead of destroying it. These changes make the play about the quest for acceptance and love; not about revenge and retribution. The play ends happily, which is not something you can say about the book.

I am not someone who believes all stories need to be happy, and I've even entertained the idea of writing another version of *Frankenstein* closer to the book with all the murder and mayhem. But at the time of its writing, that was the story I wanted to tell. In the end, it makes my play no further from the original than any other version I have seen (Kenneth Branagh gets close but he felt he had to make Elizabeth into a monster which was just weird). Adapting a play is a little like *Frankenstein* creating his monster. You try to do the best job piecing it together from the parts you have and hope that your creation isn't a terrible mistake.

I hope your students like the play. I've tried hard to make the characters real and recognizable. If they don't like it, perhaps you can challenge them to read the book and write their own adaptation. I'm sure their monster will turn out a lot different than mine. That's the thing about monsters: they are all very personal.

# Literature vs. a Good Read

Most people would not argue about Frankenstein's credentials as classic literature. But what makes one book "literature" while another is just a good read?

In literature, as in art, beauty may be in the eye of the beholder. Generally, we define books of superior quality as literature, and all other books as simply good books. But what one person sees as superior another may not. Some may view literature as books that enlighten the reader, calling upon them not to escape reality, but to reflect on it. Others may view literature as books that withstand the test of time and remain fresh year after year.

**Literature** - a) all writings in prose or verse, esp. those of an imaginative or critical character, without regard to their excellence: often distinguished from scientific writing, news reporting, etc. b) all of such writings considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, great emotional effect, etc. c) [Colloq] printed matter of any kind, as advertising, campaign leaflets, etc.

Discussion:

What is literature? Does a book have to be old to be literature?

Is there any greater value to reading great literature as opposed to reading just any book?

What does it mean to be a "well-read person?"



## Adapting Literature for the Stage

There is an art to taking a book like Frankenstein and making it into a play. Because so much of the dialogue in the novel happens within the character's heads, the playwright/adaptor, the director, and ultimately, the actors must translate thought into action.

Even as the playwright must grapple with how to use the protagonist's thoughts in the script, he/she must also be aware of creating the physical world the novelist creates with words. A good director is looking for ways to visually tell the story. A novelist may take his/her audience to a location by the simple use of a sentence. In a play, the location must in some way be indicated visually. Often this means using minimal scenery elements and letting the audience create the scene with their imagination. This requires more work from the actors to create the atmosphere of any given setting. Some plays call for elaborate sets that need to be changed at act breaks, or smaller sets that can be rolled on and off stage quickly. Our production of Frankenstein uses the latter.

### Discussion

There are many other considerations a playwright must make in adapting a book to the stage. If you were to write a stage adaptation, where would you start?

What is the difference between adapting a novel for the stage and adapting it for a film?

# Frankenstein in Film

There have been countless movies and television shows about Frankenstein. Here is a short list of some notable ones along with its release date and the actor who played the monster (forgive me if I've left out your favorite).

- Frankenstein** (1931) - Boris Karloff
- Bride of Frankenstein** (1935) - Boris Karloff
- Son of Frankenstein** (1939) - Boris Karloff
- Ghost of Frankenstein** (1942) - Lon Chaney Jr.
- Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man** (1943) - Bela Lugosi
- House of Frankenstein** (1944) Glenn Strange
- Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein** (1948) - Glenn Strange
- The Curse of Frankenstein** (1957) - Christopher Lee
- I Was a Teenage Frankenstein** (1957) - Gary Conway
- The Revenge of Frankenstein** (1958) - Michael Gwynn
- The Evil of Frankenstein** (1964) - Kiwi Kingston.
- The Horror of Frankenstein** (1970) - David Prowse
- Young Frankenstein** (1974) - Peter Boyle
- Frankenweenie** (1984) - Sparky
- The Bride** (1985) - Clancy Brown
- Mary Shelley's Frankenstein** (1994)- Robert De Niro

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## Frankenstein movie trivia:

The original 1931 movie of Frankenstein was based on a play by Peggy Webling written in 1927. This is the reason for the differences between the novel and the movie.

The character of Igor doesn't appear until *Son of Frankenstein* and is played by Bela Lugosi.

Between 1956 and 1974 British based movie studio Hammer Horror produced seven *Frankenstein* films.

The 1986 film *Gothic* is a fictionalized, surreal portrayal of the night Mary Shelley conceived of her novel, *Frankenstein*.



## Guess The Classic

Here are the opening lines from ten literary classics. Can you name them?

- Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.
- Buck did not read the newspapers.
- All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true.
- In my young and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.
- "Who is John Galt?"
- 1801- I have just returned from a visit to my landlord - the solitary neighbor that I shall be troubled with.
- You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings.
- On January 6, 1482, the people of Paris were awakened by the tumultuous clanging of all the bells in the city.
- To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently and they did not cut the scarred earth.
- A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bare-headed, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

### Answers:

- David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens
- Call of the Wild* by Jack London
- Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
- The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand
- Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte
- Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo
- The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne



