FRANKENSTEIN

Mary Shelley

Genre

Frame Narrative
MARY SHELLEY

• British author
• Née Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin
• 1797 – 1851
• Mother: Mary Wollstonecraft
  • Famous feminist writer
  • She died after giving birth to Mary
• Father: William Godwin
  • Famous political philosopher
MA RY S H E L L E Y

• When Shelley was 16, she began a romantic relationship with Percy Shelley.
• He was 21 and married to another woman with a child on the way.
• They met secretly at her mother’s grave.
• They ran away together to Switzerland.
THREE DEATHS & A WEDDING

• Shelley’s sister Fanny committed suicide.
• Percy Shelley’s wife, pregnant with their third child, drowned in an apparent suicide.
• Mary Shelley became pregnant with Percy Shelley’s child. The baby was born premature and died 2 weeks later.
• Mary and Percy Shelley were married in 1816.
• Mary Shelley had a recurring dream that her dead child came back to life.

• She wrote in her journal:
  • “Dreamt that my little baby came to life again – that it had only been cold and we rubbed it by the fire and it lived – I awake and find no baby.”

• She gave birth to a healthy baby boy the following year.
LAKE GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

- In 1816, the Shelleys visited Lord Byron in Geneva.
- Because of the rain, they were often stuck indoors.
- To pass time, they stayed up late discussing science, philosophy, and topics such as the possibility of returning a corpse to life and galvinism.
- Galvanism - stimulating muscles by electric currents.
LAKE GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

- They also read German ghost stories around the fire. Byron suggested they write their own horror stories.
- This is when Mary Shelley came up with the idea for *Frankenstein*. 
A PERFECT STORM

Recurring dream about her baby coming back to life
+
Deep conversations about science and philosophy
+
Suggestion to write a horror story
=
FRANKENSTEIN
Genre - category of literature

Science Fiction - *Frankenstein* is an early example

Gothic Fiction - combines horror, mystery, & romance

Romantic Fiction - movement of Literature, late 17th-late 18th Century
ELEMENTS OF ROMANTIC LITERATURE

ROMANTIC ERA, ROMANTIC MOVEMENT, ROMANTICISM

- Emotions
- Creative energy/power
- Imagination/mystery
- Inner struggles/introspection
- Solitary life/outcasts
- Love of nature
- Idealize country life
- Supernatural/mystical
- Melancholy and sadness
- Death
FRAME NARRATIVE & EPISTOLARY

• Epistolary Novel - a novel written as a series of letters or documents.
  
  • The novel begins with the correspondence between Robert Walton and his sister Margaret. He set out to explore the North Pole and encounters Dr. Victor Frankenstein in pursuit of his monster, and he warns Walton about the dangers of ambition.

• Frame Narrative - an introductory narrative is presented for the purpose of setting the stage for a second narrative. The frame story leads readers from a first story into another, smaller one within it.