

STUDY GUIDE

to accompany the play

FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book

By Craig Francis, Rick Miller, Paul Van Dyck

Adapted from the novel by Mary Shelley

Directed by Craig Francis and Rick Miller

A Kidoons & WYRD Production in association with

The 20K Collective and Geordie Theatre

ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide was created as a tool for teachers to help introduce young students to the world of theatre, as well as engage them more deeply with the themes and concepts developed in *Frankenstein*. This guide contains a synopsis, character and setting information, a summary of the themes and concepts at play, as well as pre- and post-show discussion questions and activity ideas. The activities include presentations and exercises that are class-ready for easy distribution to students. Additionally, most activities can be adapted to an online-learning platform. There is a 2nd PDF for projecting onscreen, [Study Guide Slides](#).

NOTE ON CONTENT & RESOURCES

This production is recommended for viewers aged 8 and up. Kidoons and WYRD Productions believe that patrons can determine what is distressing, triggering, or offensive for themselves by offering content advisories for each show.

- The script includes talk of death, mild violence, giving and taking life.
- Production includes thunder, and flashing lights.



Photo: Craig Francis

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

A live theater performance is an exciting group activity, and reviewing theatre etiquette with students of all ages can help everyone enjoy the show.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

Theatre etiquette is a set of rules that explain how to behave when watching a play to be respectful to the cast and crew and the other patrons (spectators).

- Arrive on time and use the bathroom before the start of the play to avoid interruptions.
- Stay in your seat and do not chat with your friends during the play.
- Do not use electronic devices (phones, tablets).
- Feel free to react! You can clap or laugh when you are impressed or amused; it lets the actors know that you are enjoying yourself!

It's important for students to understand that *Frankenstein* was originally a book by Mary Shelley, that has been adapted many times for films and plays over the years.

ABOUT MARY SHELLEY

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was the author who wrote *Frankenstein*, the novel behind the play you are about to watch. Mary Shelley was born in 1797, the only child of a social philosopher father and a feminist author mother. She married the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1814, and began writing *Frankenstein* during travels with him in 1816. Published in 1818, *Frankenstein* is considered the first work of Science Fiction, and it is interesting to note that this entire genre was created by an 18-year-old young woman. Mary Shelley wrote many more books and articles, and died in 1851 at age 53.



Portrait of Mary Shelley, by Richard Rothwell 1840, National Portrait Gallery, London via Wikimedia

ABOUT FRANKENSTEIN

1816 was “the year without a summer” as volcanic ash from the eruption of the volcano Mount Tambora blocked the sun around the globe. Mary Shelley and Percy Bysshe Shelley visited Lord Byron at his summer manor in the Swiss Alps. Because the vacation was gloomy, they held a competition to write a scary story. Mary Shelley published her story anonymously in 1818 as “Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus”. The book took off, was turned into a hit play, and became a classic novel in her own lifetime. We still use her ideas to describe new inventions (“mad scientists” who are “playing God”) and also to any invention that gets out of its maker’s control (“a Frankenstein monster”). The Universal horror movie adaptation of 1935 cemented the Creature in popular culture. Its makeup design (flat top skull, bolts in the neck) is often how we picture Frankenstein’s monster today, nearly 100 years after the movie and over 200 years since the book. It’s so well-known that many people call the monster “Frankenstein”, but in the book it’s simply called The Creature. Frankenstein is the name of the scientist!



Makeup artist Jack Price designing the look for Boris Karloff



Costume designer Sabrina Miller's sketch for The Creature look



Mask designer Mathieu René created this mask for our Creature (actor Eloi Archambaudoin in the premiere run)

ABOUT THIS PLAY

The play you are going to see is a new adaptation co-created by Craig Francis, Rick Miller and Paul Van Dyck. They went back to the original novel for plot, characters, and the design of the Creature. The plot: when a young graphic novelist named Mary discovers the frozen journal of Dr. Victor Frankenstein, she's drawn into his uncanny story of secret experiments to conquer death. She discovers that we all need to face our own fears. *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book* is a play that revives the original story of Frankenstein through innovative technology. Graphic novel panels and projected word bubbles interact with actors through an immersive multimedia design, along with classic theatre techniques such as masks and puppetry. *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book* focuses the audience on modern day issues, adapting the novel's framing story to confront climate change, Artificial Intelligence, and technology... monsters of our own making!

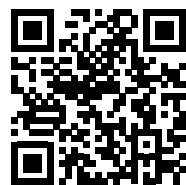
To review the plot prior to viewing the show with your students, you can use the accompanying [Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides](#), which includes comic book illustrations by Craig Francis.



Photo: Irina Litvinenko, Dress Rehearsal 2022



For the full graphic novel online, please visit the production's website: frankenstein.ca/comic



You can find out more about the novel with [Teaching 'Frankenstein' With The New York Times](#).

MEET THE CHARACTERS



MARY
A young person in
the present day



MARY'S DAD
An inventor,
a pioneer in robotics
and AI



**VICTOR
FRANKENSTEIN**
A clever student in
the early 1800's



**ALPHONSE
FRANKENSTEIN**
Victor's father



**WILLIAM
FRANKENSTEIN**
Victor's little brother



JUSTINE
The Frankensteins'
housekeeper and
William's nanny



**PROFESSOR
KREMPE**
Professor of
medicine



**ELIZABETH
LAVENZA**
A student of
medicine, Victor's
close friend



THE CREATURE
Victor's creation



LINA
Coffee shop owner
in Geneva



DELACEY
A blind old man in
the Swiss woods



FELIX
Delacey's son, a
woodcutter



GRACE
A lighthouse keeper
in Scotland



THE COMPANION
Victor's second
creation

For the full cast
and crew,
please visit:
[frankenstein.ca/
cast-and-crew](http://frankenstein.ca/cast-and-crew)



Pre-Show Videos

Explore our outreach videos—designed for pre- or post-show viewing to deepen your connection with the play through behind-the-scenes insights, thematic discussions, and creative context.



FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book presents
"ICE TO MEET YOU"



FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book presents
"IT'S ALIVE!... (and Touring)"



To watch the videos,
please visit:
frankenstein.ca/education

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions may be used to initiate conversation and build background information of the main themes in *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book*. They might also be used as writing/short scene prompts or as an introduction to lesson plans. Please select the questions that are most appropriate to the age group you teach.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

1. Would you want to live forever? Why? Why not?
2. Do you ever feel lonely? What do you do when you are lonely?
3. Name some human creations / inventions / discoveries that you think have benefited us, and others you think have harmed us.
4. What do you know about Artificial Intelligence (AI)? What are the benefits of AI? What are the potential risks?
5. What do you know about climate change? How can scientific discovery help with climate change?
6. What would you do if you felt like the project or artwork you were working on was a failure? Why?
7. What are possible reactions people might have when they are facing something that scares them? What do you do?

Pre-Show Activity: Climate change and artificial intelligence

Students will benefit from having preliminary background knowledge on the topics of climate change and artificial intelligence. As a class or in groups, students can visit [NASA Climate Kids](#) to answer the discussion questions and learn more about climate change.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

In the play, Mary's father is attempting to address climate change with the help of artificial intelligence... Is that actually possible? Let's find out! Climate change often refers to how the surface of the Earth is getting rapidly warmer over time. Visit [NASA Climate Kids](#) to learn more about climate change and to answer these questions.

- What is climate change?
- Why is it an important issue for humans to address?
- What can humans do to contribute to improve this situation?

Once they have developed a firmer understanding of climate change, they can begin to explore how artificial intelligence can contribute to address climate control. As a class or in groups, students can Watch [Four ways AI can help tackle climate change](#) by BBC Ideas to hear Simon Redfern from the University of Cambridge explain how AI can help us understand, adapt to and even reduce climate change.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

Artificial intelligence or "AI" is the ability for a computer to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, and to learn by itself. For instance, with AI, computers can respond to questions, review data, research, and problem-solve.

- Can you name 5 times you encounter AI in your day?
- How does technology affect your life? Our society?
- How do you think artificial intelligence can help humans address the issue of climate change?

Ways your students may encounter AI in their day can include: performing a Google Search; clicking the Summary results of a Google search; asking ChatGPT a question; clicking on "For you" or Suggested Reels in Instagram or TikTok or BlueSky or X; using "suggested text" or "autocomplete" in a text message; click on "Watch next" video on YouTube or Netflix; using an automated helper or chatbot on a site; shopping and seeing "You may also like" suggestions; using anything with surge pricing, like Uber; looking up the weather; using spellcheck or grammar check functions; using a filter on a photograph.

Post-Show Discussion Questions

The discussion questions may be used to build an understanding of Frankenstein and its messages. They can be used as writing prompts or as an introduction to lesson plans.

Please select the questions that are most appropriate to the age group you teach.

1. Why did Mary drop out of art school? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?
2. Why did Mary's father abandon his robot?
3. Why did Victor abandon his creature?
4. How did the Creature react to being abandoned? To having no parent figure?
5. How did the Creature learn to talk? Read?
6. What are 3 lessons the Creature learns from Delacey?
7. Why was Delacey able to befriend the Creature despite its appearance?
8. The Creature wanted a companion because it was the only one of its kind in the world. Discuss the importance of having even one friend who knows what you are going through.
9. Once Victor and The Creature hurt each other, they each take revenge. Are there other actions that they could have taken that would make the story turn out differently?
10. This is a multimedia play, which means the artists used many theatrical techniques (sound, visuals, special effects, costumes, props, video productions, etc.) to bring the story to life. Discuss these techniques and which you enjoyed the most.
11. Discuss the different fathers in Frankenstein. Describe their characteristics as fathers and their relationships with their child (or creature).
 - a. Victor's father, Alphonse
 - b. Mary's father
 - c. Delacey, Felix's father
 - d. Victor ("father" of the Creature)
12. Which character do you relate to the most? Why?
13. At the end of the play, the Creature writes "I forgive you" as the last entry in Victor's journal? What was he forgiving him for?
14. According to you, what lessons can we learn from this story?

Post-Show Activity: Journal writing

The story centers around Mary finding and reading Victor Frankenstein's journal. Journaling can help children and adolescents process their feelings and build an understanding of their world. Once you have reviewed the structure and tone of a journal entry, students can select one of the following two journal writing ideas.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

Choose one of the following journal activities. Remember to date your entry, use "Dear diary," as an opener, and feel free to use a personal, informal tone when writing, as if you were writing for yourself only.

- Mary learns about Victor's life and the time period in which he lived by reading his journal. Write a journal entry about your daily life that includes information that would help someone living in a different time period or a different part of the world understand you and your society.
- Write a review of the play as a journal entry. Make sure to include information about the plot, the actors, the special effects, how you felt while watching it and whether you would recommend the play to your friends.

Post-Show Activity: Scientific discovery

Several of the characters in *Frankenstein* attempt to address issues by pushing the boundaries of technology and science. Let your students engage their imagination to fix one of their own problems. Review the style of science-fiction and have them brainstorm solutions to their problems, using scientific discovery and inventions. Students may either produce a text or scene.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

When Victor's mother dies, he becomes obsessed with achieving immortality using his scientific knowledge. Similarly, Mary's dad wants to fix climate change by using advanced technology. Both attempted to fix a problem with scientific discovery and innovation.

Select and describe a personal or world problem that you would like to fix and explain how you would address it using scientific or technological innovation. Just like science-fiction writers, feel free to stretch or even make up the science behind your invention.

Post-Show Activity: Scenario: Facing Our Own Monsters

The importance of facing and addressing our difficulties (before they face us!) is a recurring theme throughout the play. Have students create and perform a scene in which the characters face a personal fear or a problem of their own making instead of resorting to denial.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

One of the themes of the play *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book* is the importance of facing our monsters before they face us. While Victor's monster was an actual creature, monsters can also be our fears or mistakes. In groups of 2-4 students, create and write or perform a scene in which a character either faces a long-time fear or creates an unideal situation they must face and fix.

Post-Show Activity: Design your own comic book

Graphic novels are becoming an increasingly popular medium for students, helping them engage in literature and explore heavy themes. Pairing this medium with theater, the writers and producers of *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book* used comic book and graphic novel techniques to bring the classic story to life. Have students explore creating this medium to express themselves, with the direction of your choice. Use [Canva](#), a free website on which students can design their own comic strip design, or blank comic strip templates, to help students structure their work.

Included in the Frankenstein - Study Guide Slides

The writers and producers of *FRANKENSTEIN: A Living Comic Book* used interesting comic book and graphic novel techniques to bring the story to life. Using some of the techniques you have learned, design your own comic strip. First you will brainstorm and select the scenes, including actions and dialogue, and develop a storyboard, before completing the final comic strip product.

Here are some comic strip techniques to explore:

- Speech bubbles or thought bubbles
- Onomatopoeia (a word that imitates the sound it is describing)
- Captions in the top left corner to indicate time or location, or any other narrative information

Post-Show Handout: Analyze the Stage Version!

Now that you've seen the stage play, you can imagine all the creative jobs that are in theatre beyond the text! Once the script is written, the directors worked with lighting, sound, multimedia, and a costume / props / puppet designers to make the story as watchable as possible onstage! Looking at the image below, write briefly:

- How does each department help the show affect the audience?
- How does each department help the show look like a living comic book?

NAME: _____



Photo: Craig Francis

Lighting	Colour Design	Costumes	Set Design	Prop Design	Staging

Quotation Station: Women in Medicine

VICTOR What's wrong?
ELIZABETH It's the university, they're refusing to give me a degree. They said
I could study medicine all I want, but I'll never be a doctor.
VICTOR Why?
ELIZABETH Because I'm a girl.
VICTOR But you're the best student I know.
ELIZABETH Better than you?
VICTOR Absolutely.

When Frankenstein was published in 1818, women were not allowed to become doctors in Europe, Canada, or the USA.

1. Why might that be? What did people think?
2. Is it fair? Do women make lesser doctors?
3. This is an example of sexism, which is when people treat someone unfairly based on their gender. Can you think of other examples of sexism?
4. What can you say if you witness someone acting sexist or saying something sexist?

Art, as well as science, can have sexism. When Mary Shelley published the book in 1818, she left her name off it, partly because she was a woman. Even so, The British Critic wrote "The writer of it is, we understand, a female... and we shall therefore dismiss the novel without further comment."

Can you think of any other examples of sexism in the arts? In math or science? In sports?

Quotation Station: Friendship

CREATURE I am alone. Humans are repulsed by me. But... someone as repulsive as myself would not run away from me.

VICTOR You want me to disfigure someone so they look like... you?!

CREATURE No, ding dong! I want you to make me a companion –

1. Why does Creature want a companion? What could a companion or friend provide him with?
2. Humans are social creatures that crave human interaction. Share a time when you felt lonely. Why did you feel this way? What did you do? (If you find that question upsetting, you can share why it upsets you instead of a time you felt lonely.)
3. How is the Creature different on the inside, compared to its appearance?
4. When and how did Creature learn about the value of friendship? Companionship? Family? (these might all be different people / events)

Quotation Station: Facing Our Monsters

MARY We create, and we can learn from our creations.
The world is full of monsters... monsters of our own making.
And running away from them is no longer an option.
We all have the choice to face our fears. Before they face us!

1. What did Victor learn from the Creature? What did Mary learn from her creations (her art)? Are there lessons you could apply in life?
2. Victor and Mary both ran away from their failures. How might the story be different if they looked after the things they created?
3. What does Mary mean when she says the world is full of monsters of our own making?
4. Why can't we run away from them? What can we do instead?