



The B Street Theatre
Student Matinees
2727 B St.
Sacramento, CA 95816
www.bstreettheatre.org

Contact: Valerie Marston
(916) 442-5635
vmarston@bstreettheatre.org

Study Guide

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

An Original Adaptation
by Jerry Montoya

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE PLAY

Before the Play.....	3
Synopsis, Themes, Theatrical Terms	
Pre-Show Discussion Questions	
During and After the Play.....	4
Audience Behavior, Pronunciation	
Post-show Discussion Questions	

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary.....	5
A Book Without Words???	
Going Gothic	
Writing, Speaking and Listening.....	6
Get Inspired!	
3 Bags	
History and Social Science.....	7
Written By Mrs...	
Happy Holidays	
Character Counts.....	8
Character Counts Thematic Questions for Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i>	

RESOURCES & ADDENDA

Further Reading and Learning, Index.....	9
A Book Without Words??? Word Search.....	10

BEFORE THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

Witness the spark of inspiration that started it all with playwright Jerry Montoya's imaginative adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. When a sunny weekend in 1816 is ruined by a raging storm, writers Mary and Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and friends instead compete to craft the best ghost story. Mary's tragic story of young love, pride, and scientific exploration out of control not only wins the contest, but goes on to spark an entire genre of literature.

THEMES: Classic Literature, Friendship, Science & Morality, Character Counts, Mythology

THEATRE TERMS

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS
3.0 Historical & Cultural Context

Make sure you know the following terms so you can use them later.

SCRIPT: The written play that tells actors what to say and what to do.

ACTORS: The people who say the words and do the actions on stage.

CHARACTER: The person or thing that an actor pretends to be or portrays.

DIRECTOR: The person who tells the actors how to say the words and how to do the actions.

SCENERY or the SET: The backdrops, furniture, and other pieces that show the audience where the play is happening.

COSTUMES or WARDROBE: The clothes and other things an actor wears to show who they are.

PROPS: The things that actors use (such as a book or broom) during the play.

SOUND: The sound effects (like a doorbell or thunder) that help to tell the story.

LIGHTING: The lights that help the audience to see the actors and scenery on the stage.

THEATER: The place where a play is performed. It is from the Greek word *THEATRON*, which means "watching place".

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

READING (Literature): Key Ideas and Details

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension & Collaboration

3.1 4.1 5.2

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

3.6 4.6 5.6

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception

1. How much of Mary Shelley's original book *Frankenstein* can you recall? Who were the main characters and what did they do? What were Shelley's main themes and messages?
2. What does the phrase "just because you can doesn't mean you should" mean to you? Give some examples of things we can do but shouldn't and why.
3. Introduce the terms listed in the Theatrical Terms list provided. Can you give examples of these terms from plays or movies you've seen?
4. What do you know about the myths of alchemy, the Philosopher's Stone, and/or the Elixir of Life? What other books, movies, plays, and games make use of these myths? (Ex. *Harry Potter*, *Final Fantasy*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*)
5. What makes a story a 'ghost story' or Gothic literature? Must there be certain types of characters? Certain settings? Certain events? Certain tone or themes?

DURING AND AFTER THE PLAY

DURING THE PLAY

AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

While watching a live theatre performance, it is important to sit quietly and listen. It does not mean that you need to be silent. Be sure to laugh at the funny parts (or cry at the sad parts), and certainly applaud at the end! Actors love it when an audience is involved with the show by actively watching and listening.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

READING (Literature): Key Ideas and Details

5.3 6.3 7.3 8.3

READING (Literature): Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

4.7 5.7 6.7 7.7 8.7

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension & Collaboration

3.2,3

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

3.6 4.6 5.6

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

1. Compare and contrast Shelley's *Frankenstein* with Montoya's adaptation:
 - a. How were the characters similar and how were they different?
 - b. What and who else was the playwright interested in exploring besides Shelley's story and her characters?
 - c. Did the playwright leave out any major events? Add any new ones?
 - d. What other aspects did he change, add, or leave out?
 - e. What themes did Montoya develop throughout the play? How did they differ from the themes Shelley developed in her book? How were they similar?
2. Refer back to the Theatrical Terms list on page 3. What examples of these terms did you find in the play?
 - a. What did you think of the scenery, costumes, and props? Did they help you understand the story being told? Why or why not?
 - b. How did the music, lighting, and sound effects used during the play help you understand the story being told?
3. Use all three of the 'ghost stories' depicted in Montoya's play to answer the following questions:
 - a. Which of the three stories best fits your definition of a 'ghost story' or Gothic literature according to your pre-show discussion in Question 5?
 - b. How did Mary, Lord Byron, Dr. Polidori and the others define 'ghost stories' as a genre?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY & READING

Activity 1: A Book Without Words???

LANGUAGE: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

3.4 4.4 5.4

READING (Foundational Skills): Phonics and Word Recognition

3.3 4.3 5.3

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

The following words can be used in discussion of the play and in other activities.

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. inn | 6. wretched | 11. elixir |
| 2. curiosity | 7. emaciated | 12. reconvene |
| 3. germinate | 8. laboratory | 13. corpse |
| 4. stature | 9. enlightenment | 14. creature |
| 5. apparition | 10. alchemy | 15. immortality |

Use a DICTIONARY to do the following:

- Define the words and identify their parts of speech
- Divide each word into syllables
- Identify the language of origin for each word
- Identify roots and any prefixes or suffixes in each word--can you add/take away any prefixes or suffixes to make different words?
- Do any of these words have multiple meanings? Describe the different meanings
- See if you can use any of these three words in a sentence

Activity 2: Going Gothic

READING (Literature): Key ideas and Details

6.2 7.2-3 8.2

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: Growth and Conflict

8.6.7

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is considered part of the Gothic and Science Fiction genres that became popular during the 19th century. The genre of Gothic literature in particular gained popularity in England during the 1790s and survives today in the work of Steven King and other authors.

Divide the class into groups and have each group choose a short story it feels fits the Gothic genre. Have each group research the author and his/her historical context and critically discuss the following questions:

- What aspects of the story's setting, plot, characterizations, and themes lead you to agree that the story fits into the Gothic genre?
- For stories with historical settings, how is the story shaped by the cultural, political, and/or socio-economic conditions of the time period? How does the story comment on these conditions?
- What worldview do the tone and themes of the work express?
- Is there an anti-hero in your story? What makes him or her an anti-hero?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 3: Get Inspired!

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes

3.3 4.3 5.3 6.3 7.3 8.3

1. In *Frankenstein*, Lord Byron mentions Aristotle's Unities—the observation that the best stories take place within a 24-hour time period in the same setting and have one storyline. See if you can write a story that conforms to the Unities.
2. Playwright Jerry Montoya chose not only to explore how Shelley's *Frankenstein* came to be, but also Mary Shelley herself. Describe a time when you felt inspired to write or act out something, create a craft, or do something new or different.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension and Collaboration

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Listen carefully to your classmates' presentations and ask them questions.

WRITING

WRITING: Production and Distribution of Writing

3.4-5 4.4-5 5.4-5 6.4-5 7.4-5 8.4-5

WRITING: Range of Writing

LANGUAGE: Conventions of Standard English

LANGUAGE: Knowledge of Language

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Be sure to revise and edit what you write.

Activity 4: 3 Bags

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes

3.3 4.3 5.3 6.3 7.3 8.3

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS:

2.0 Creative Expression

Find 3 paper bags (or other opaque containers) and label them **Characters**, **Settings**, and **Problems**.

Pass out several slips of paper to each student. Have them write suggestions for each category and put them in the appropriate bags.

Characters can be people, animals, animate objects, etc. and can include adjectives
Ex. teacher, toaster, lazy dog

Settings can be times, places or time periods
Ex. Summer, morning, Los Angeles, the 60s

Problems should be stated in a short sentence or phrase
Ex. Can't find car keys, all toys on Earth stolen, dog eats homework

After the bags have been filled, ask each student to choose one slip from each bag.

Next, have students write a short ghost story that incorporates each element. They will have to use their imaginations to fit them all together! They may also add other characters, settings, and problems if they wish.

For example, a student might select the following:

Character: one-eyed Pirate

Setting: grocery store

Problem: can't find the car keys

The student could then write a story about what happens when the one-eyed Pirate loses his/her keys at the grocery store.

Have students share their stories with the class.

Extension: Have your students make their Character, Setting, and Problem selections as groups of 3-4. Have them use their selections to create concepts for ghost stories that they then write as plays or depict in storyboards. Share with the class.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Continuity and Change; California: A Changing State; Making a New Nation; Ancient Civilizations; Medieval and Early Modern Times; Growth and Conflict

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Activity 6: Written By Mrs....

Mary Shelley was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, a famous English feminist of the 18th century. She became part of a long line of women, including Jane Austen and later Francis Hodgson Burnett, who managed to make a career out of writing.

Think of the female novelists, poets, playwrights, performers, and other cultural figures famous in a nation or culture that you are studying. Have your students research their lives and work either individually or in groups to answer the following questions. Have them share their answers with the class.

- How were she and her work perceived in her own time? Has her reputation changed?
- What kind of obstacles did she face in her profession as a woman?
- What impact did she have upon history, thought, and/or culture?

Activity 7: The Quest for Immortality

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes

3.2 4.2 5.2 6.2 7.2 8.2

WRITING Research to Build and Present Knowledge

3.7 4.7 5.7 6.7 7.7 8.7

Cultures all over the world have myths and documented histories concerning our alchemical quest for immortality. Some attempts at attaining immortality through the mixing of plants and metals have brought about some important discoveries, while others have found their way into folklore and popular culture.

Explore the myths and histories surrounding the quest for immortality held by a nation or culture you are studying using the examples below (or others you know of). Why are these stories important to people? What are the good and bad consequences of these experiments? Create posters or informational pamphlets to share with the class.

- Lingzhi mushrooms and Chinese alchemy
- Amrita or Soma
- Ambrosia or Nectar
- Medieval alchemy—the Philosopher's Stone & the Elixir of Life
- Nicholas Flamel and Count St. Germain

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CHARACTER COUNTS

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension & Collaboration

K.2 1.2 2.2 3.2,3

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

K.4,6 1.4,6 2.6 3.6 4.6 5.6

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes

3.1 4.1 5.1 6.1 7.1 8.1

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Discuss the following questions as a class or assign certain questions for students to answer in a persuasive essay.

Responsibility and Friendship

1. What does it mean to be responsible for yourself and your actions? What does it mean to behave responsibly?
2. Every action can have positive and negative consequences. Decide why you would be or not be responsible for the consequences of the following actions:
 - a. You leave a carton of milk out unrefrigerated all night long. It spoils.
 - b. You are working on a group project. Your job is to make a poster, but you wait until the last minute and the poster is not written neatly. Your group receives a lower grade.
 - c. You want to start a club for people who enjoy playing video games. You only want the club to meet after school, but some club members skip school to meet and play video games. They get detention.
3. In *Frankenstein*, Victor decides to find and test the Philosopher's Stone. What consequences do you think Victor should have been prepared to face?
4. What value did Victor place in his friendships with others? Was he responsible for Henry's death? Elizabeth's death? His own death? Why?
5. Should Victor have created the monster? What positive consequences could have come from this act? Do you think humans should have the power to create life through science?
6. How should Victor have treated his creation?

Science & Morality

SCIENCE: Life Sciences

Have your students conduct further research on the following issues raised if necessary.

1. The idea of humans being able to create life through science rather than natural reproduction, which *Frankenstein* explores, is at odds with the belief held by many religions that only gods and deities have the power or right to create life spontaneously. If humans had the power to create life as Victor does, what would be the responsible and ethical way to use it? What would the negative consequences be if humans had this power?
2. What use has been made of the knowledge and technologies gained through cloning experiments?
3. Darwin's concept of Evolution also found itself at odds with those who could not accept the idea of humans being descended from other life forms. When a scientist forms a theory or makes a discovery that goes against previously accepted theories, religious teachings, or conventional wisdom, what pros and cons must he or she weigh in deciding to pursue or publish it?

RESOURCES & ADDENDA

FURTHER READING & LEARNING

Electronic Resources

Mary Shelley Biography

<http://www.biography.com/people/mary-shelley-9481497>

5 Ancient Legends About the Secret of Immortality

<http://ultraculture.org/blog/2014/05/05/5-ancient-legends-secret-immortality/>

List of Best Gothic Reads

http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/1230.Best_Gothic_Books_Of_All_Time?page=2#763497

Science in Context

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/scic?trialParam=UPpz0M0SpIyjEzvNMSXKK_PeIqLcMg9c&p=SCIC&u=special_scirc

Web Activities

Goosebumps: Make Your Own Graphix

<http://www.scholastic.com/goosebumpsgraphix/makeyourown/index.htm>

Poetry Writing with Karla Ruskin

http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/karla_home.htm

INDEX

READING

Literature: Key ideas and Details: 3, 4, 5

Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas: 4

Foundation Skills:

-Phonics and Word Recognition: 5

LANGUAGE

Conventions of Standard English: 6

Knowledge of Language: 6

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 5

WRITING

Text Types and Purposes: 6, 7

Production and Distribution of Writing: 6

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: 7

Range of Writing: 6

SPEAKING & LISTENING

Comprehension & Collaboration: 3, 4, 6, 8

Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Continuity and Change: 7

California: A Changing State: 7

Making a New Nation: 7

Ancient Civilizations: 7

Medieval and Early Modern Life: 7

Growth and Conflict: 5, 7

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception: 3, 4

2.0 Creative Expression: 6

3.0 Historical & Cultural Context: 3

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing: 4

5.0 Connections, Relationships,
Applications: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

SCIENCE

Life Sciences: 8

A Book Without Words???

Word Search

Find these words in the word search.

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. inn | 6. wretched | 11. elixir |
| 2. curiosity | 7. emaciated | 12. reconvene |
| 3. germinate | 8. laboratory | 13. corpse |
| 4. stature | 9. enlightenment | 14. creature |
| 5. apparition | 10. alchemy | 15. immortality |

N V C Y E J T A N H S O K U J
F O B R M L Y J C N W C E R Y
D B I O A R G E R M I N A T E
E B B T C L F S J K L U I F E
H W S A I O B C T I B S U L V
C P E R A R O H G A O Y I E Z
T H M O T I A H H I T X E U P
E D A B E W T P R D I U T N R
R F L A D E F U P R I W R E C
W S C L N A C R E A T U R E Y
F J H M Y T I L A T R O M M I
C Q E N E V N O C E R R I G L
Q N M P J O B M P E S P R O C
T K Y A Z C J H H D G T X O M
Q N E M N P S V Z Z U K B Q K



"The kids were completely engaged and entertained."

— Staff Member, Shriners' Hospital

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Anansi the Spider

September 29 – November 6, 2015

Adapted by Dave Pierini

INTRODUCING! Anansi, the Spider! One of the GREAT folk heroes of the world! He is a rogue, a mischief-maker, and a wise, lovable creature who triumphs over larger foes. These African folktales will delight all ages.

A Christmas Carol

November 17 – December 18, 2016

Adapted by Buck Busfield

Dust doesn't have time to settle on this age-old story! And more than just dust flies with this B Street adaptation!

Frankenstein

February 16 – March 18, 2016

Adapted by Jerry Montoya

Travel in time to the first science fiction story ever written! Journey with Viktor Frankenstein and encounter his doomed creature! A surprising tale of friendship, alienation and love.

Alice in Wonderland

April 12 – March 18, 2016

Adapted by Buck Busfield

Don't be late for these very important dates! Come down the rabbit hole with Alice!

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"You put the spark in them to write."

— 4th Grade Teacher, Cordova Villa Elementary,
Rancho Cordova

WORKSHOPS & RESIDENCIES

We come to you!

Introduction to Playwriting

Single interactive 90-Minute Playwriting Workshop designed to inspire and empower students to write their own plays.

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Three interactive 90-Minute Playwriting Workshops designed to lead students from inspired ideas to completed drafts of original plays.

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- Learn theatre games and exercises!
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"The quality of the production was outstanding."

— 5th Grade Teacher, Pine Grove Elementary, Jackson

SCHOOL TOUR

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PRESIDENTIAL PALOOZA!

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They manage congress, balance budgets, and negotiate for peace. How hard can the job of President be? Find out more in this colorful, engaging, and fast-paced tribute to the uncommon citizens who mastered the art of multitasking while occupying the highest office in the land!

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January 18 – March 11, 2016

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