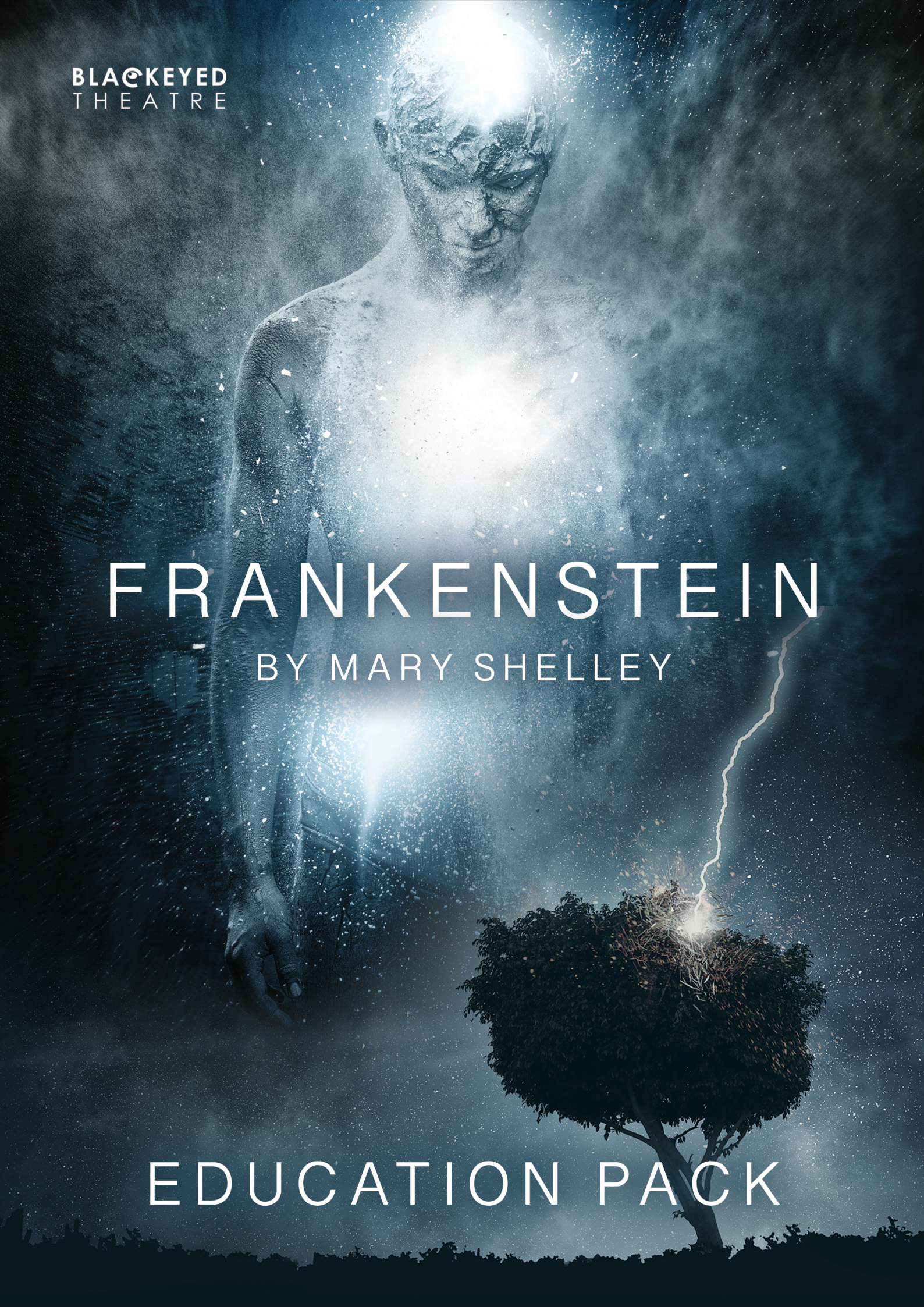

BLACKEYED
THEATRE
FRANKENSTEIN
BY MARY SHELLEY
EDUCATION PACK

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BLACKEYED THEATRE

SOUTH HILL PARK shp ARTS CENTRE

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Blackeyed Theatre Ltd
South Hill Park, Ringmead, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7PA
www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

About this resource

This resource is designed to fully support our touring production of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and provide you with additional creative and cross-curricular activities to enhance your visit to the production. It is designed for Key Stages 3 and 4, but activities can be adapted for other ages.

The resource comprises 3 sections:

1 Pre-production
This is the largest section and contains notes and activities to help your group get to grips with the play before their visit; to think about the story and themes and to consider contemporary dramatic interpretations. This content covers 5 key areas:

- **Story**
- **Historical Context**
- **Characters**
- **Themes**
- **Production notes**

Within these key areas you'll find useful information, student activities and practical tasks that you can set for your group to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes about each topic along the way.

2 Watching the show
This section contains questions and activities that students can engage with during their visit to see the production, to help maximise their understanding and enjoyment.

3 Post production
This section contains guidance for an evaluation session following the production, based on your students' critical appreciation.

Stretch

These boxes contain higher level thinking questions to stretch and challenge your students.
These can be turned into student activities, or used for further research and homework.
They encourage students to make connections between the historical context of the text and contemporary events and global issues.

This resource was written by Liz Allum and designed by Danielle Corbishley
with contributions from the creative team.
For more information about the tour, our education pack, or Blackeyed Theatre in general
please email us at info@blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

Blackeyed Theatre

Blackeyed Theatre is one of the UK's leading mid-scale touring theatre companies. Since 2004 we have been creating exciting opportunities for artists and audiences by producing theatre that's audacious, accessible and memorable. Blackeyed Theatre has two principal objectives through the work it produces; to provide audiences and artists with fresh, challenging work; and to make that work sustainable by reaching as wide and diverse an audience as possible. Over the past few years, Blackeyed Theatre has balanced these artistic and business objectives by creating new, exciting versions of established classics in unique ways and by identifying relevance with today's audiences.

Recent examples of this include the company's 2016/17 production of Frankenstein, which used Bunraku puppetry to portray the Creature, the 2015 production of The Great Gatsby, whose cast of seven doubled up as a 1920s jazz band, and the 2012 production of Brecht's Mother Courage And her Children, set in a post-apocalyptic world, designed to establish relevance with 21st century world events.

Recent new commissions include *Jane Eyre* and *Sherlock Holmes: The Sign Of Four* (by Nick Lane), *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* (both by John Ginman), as well as *The Great Gatsby* (by Stephen Sharkey), which was published by Methuen.

In 2014, Blackeyed's production of *Not About Heroes* by Stephen MacDonald toured to 45 UK theatres. Combining newly commissioned music and projection, this was a highly theatrical, multi-sensory production of an established classic.

Other touring productions include *Teechers* (John Godber), *The Trial* (Steven Berkoff), *Oh What A Lovely War* (Theatre Workshop), *The Madness of George III* (Alan Bennett), *Alfie* (Bill Naughton), *The Cherry Orchard* (Anton Chekhov), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Bertolt Brecht), the world premiere of *Oedipus* (Steven Berkoff) and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Bertolt Brecht).

In 2009 Blackeyed Theatre became an associate company of South Hill Park Arts Centre, and in 2011 it launched its first new writing scheme, Pulse, with the intention to provide a new writer with the opportunity to see their work produced professionally on stage. The winning play, The Beekeeper, was performed initially at South Hill Park in Bracknell before transferring to Waterloo East Theatre in London for a three week run, where it received three Off West End Theatre Award nominations.

We strive to make our work sustainable by producing theatre that audiences want to see in ways that challenge their expectations, by bringing together artists with a genuine passion for the work they produce, and through an appreciation that titles of work with a wide appeal can still be performed in ways that push artistic boundaries. In short, it's about following audiences but also leading them, being affordable and responsive to demand while innovating and challenging expectations.



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Mary was born in 1797. Her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were both writers. Her father was famous for his revolutionary ideas about politics and society, and her mother was a pioneer in feminist writing. The new and radical ideas of her father, mother and her future husband Percy Shelley, along with the education she received and continued throughout her life would shape how she approached the world and her writing.

Her mother died just 10 days after Mary was born. Life was difficult for her father who was often in debt, and Mary did not get on well with her step mother, but formed a close friendship with her step-sister Claire Clairmont.

When Mary was 17, she ran away with Percy Shelley, a famous poet she had met two years before. He was married to a woman named Harriet, and Percy and Harriet had been friends of Mary's father.

Mary gave birth to her and Percy's first child, but sadly the baby died two weeks later. Percy's wife Harriet drowned herself in 1816. Percy quickly married Mary and they had three more children together, but only one survived. Mary suffered a lot of loss during her life, her half sister Fanny, three of her children, her parents, her husband and friends.



Mary Shelley's portrait by Richard Rothwell, shown at the Royal Academy in 1840

Whilst Percy, Mary and her step sister Claire were spending the summer with the poet Lord Byron in Geneva, *Frankenstein* was written. The weather was bad and so the group spent much of their time reading and writing together. They particularly enjoyed working their way through *Fantasmagoriana*, a collection of German ghost stories.

The story Mary composed, which later became *Frankenstein*, drew on recent scientific progress of the time and the writings of Luigi Galvani. Galvani was a physicist who had discovered that muscles in human and animal tissue conduct and react to electricity. *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* was published two years later, in 1818.

Percy Shelley drowned in a storm whilst sailing near Italy in 1822. Mary was only 24 and never remarried.

Mary wrote many other books, as well as *Frankenstein*. Her 1823 novel *Valperga,* was a fictionalised account of the 14th Century despot Castracani, who forces the woman he loves to choose between love and political freedom. She chooses freedom. *The Last Man* was an early science fiction novel, set in a post-apocalytic world. It reflects the several deaths she grieved of literary friends, and attacks the failures of the revolutionary political ideas of the time to bring about real change.
She also wrote many travel novels, was an accomplished editor, and was instrumental in editing and publishing many of the published collections of her husband's writing.

Mary died in 1851 at the age of 53, most likely from a brain tumour, that had given her years of headaches and occasional muscle paralysis.

Note from the writer

Adapting Frankenstein for Blackeyed Theatre

Any stage adaptation of a novel should aim to create an essentially theatrical experience. In this case, more than 200 pages of prose fiction are translated into two hours of live performance. There is no such thing as a definitive stage version, as any treatment has to take account of many elements that are particular to its staging: the resources available, the circumstances of performance, and the values and expectations of company and audiences. I've worked with Blackeyed Theatre before (on Dracula in 2013) and I'm familiar with their approach: a small cast of multi-skilled performers use elements of spoken text, music, sound and visuals to create powerful performance events that can be toured to a wide range of venues. So I've had the company very much in mind while working on the script.

Since its first publication in 1818, Frankenstein has inspired many stage adaptations. As early as 1823 Richard Brinsley Peake wrote a version called called Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein. It took great liberties with the narrative, and made the action and the character-types conform to the melodramatic conventions of the day: Victor had a comic assistant, called Fritz, Elizabeth became Victor's sister and was wooed by Henry Clerval. Mary Shelley's framing narrative with James Walton was cut completely. The Creature (named the Monster in Peake's version) was not given any dialogue to speak. Some of the staging must have been spectacular: including a final scene in which Victor and the Monster are annihilated in an onstage avalanche, accompanied by loud thunder and a heavy fall of snow. The popularity of the show inspired the publication of a second edition of the novel. But this version for Blackeyed Theatre uses a very different approach.

We respect the novel's multi-layered way of telling the story. Frankenstein is carefully constructed like a set of Russian dolls: it has a story within a story within a story. At the core of the book is the Creature's account of the experiences that have formed him, and we include it, told in the Creature's own words. One strength of the novel is the way Mary Shelley uses her story to explore complex ethical issues. The Creature's voice is crucial to this.

The outer frame of the Walton narrative is also retained, not just to provide us with distance from the incredible story Victor has to tell, but to realise Shelley's astonishing insights into the psychology of men who push themselves (and others) to the limits in order to make new discoveries. Walton contains the seeds of more tragedy, and we watch him responding to Victor's tale. At the point when Walton and Victor meet, neither man's story is complete. So there is tension in observing the fates of these two driven men. Will they learn from Victor's experiences, and if so, what? For us, that has become the focusing spine of the action.

In my view the book has weaknesses, and as playwright it is my task is either to minimise these, or use them creatively. Surprisingly perhaps, given the radical household in which Shelley grew up, the novel's female characters can seem woefully conventional and flat, very much there to function as foils for the more fully realised men. It is particularly important that we come to value Elizabeth in her own right, so that her fate really engages us. I have given her more substance and agency as a character, while respecting the social norms of period and place. There are also a number of improbabilities in the plot - for example, how is Victor able to access the many body parts needed for the second Creature while working on a completely isolated Scottish island? In this case, the how of the process is far less important than the consequences of Victor's actions when the body is completed, and we have focused the action accordingly.

In compressing the action for a two-hour performance, it has been necessary to remove characters and whole episodes. The guiding principles here have been to work not just with the three-dimensional storytelling outlined above, but to engage with the novel's underlying genre and story structure. At heart, Frankenstein is a tragedy, that of an over-reacher who comes to grief - like Doctor Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's play of that name. It also develops into an exciting tale of revenge, with both Victor and the Creature seeking to avenge personal wrongs.

This version is also inspired by Shelley's keen interest in some of the most advanced scientific thinking of her day, in particular Galvanism, and Humphry Davy's work on the creative potential of Electricity. She was living through a time in which the pace of scientific discovery was rapid, and Science seemed able to empower Mankind in almost superhuman ways. We also draw on her romantic interest in the sublime as made manifest in wild and challenging landscapes: much of the action takes place in exciting Alpine and Arctic settings. There is also a strong literary background, for example the explicit parallels made with John Milton's Paradise Lost - we retain these but in a limited way, concerned that these might confuse rather than enrich the action for audiences unfamiliar with Milton's poem.

Peake sought to inspire wonder in his audience by the realistic staging of dramatic natural events. Today film and television are better equipped to provide spectacle of that kind. So we use language, visuals and sound (including puppetry) in more suggestive ways, aiming to engage the imagination of the audience - and hopefully creating a unique energy and rapport at each performance.

Therefore, the prime aim is to create a compelling theatrical event, but this version also seeks to provoke thought and discussion around many key issues that have renewed significance for us today: for example, the ethics of genetic experimentation, and the causes of violent behaviour in some marginalised social groups. When it was first published, Shelley's novel attracted many hostile reviews, because it engages directly with themes that were considered taboo. Is its material in any way taboo today? What is not in doubt is the complexity of the debate she wishes the reader to engage in about the themes of the novel. Working on this has left me full of admiration for the achievement of the nineteen-year-old novice writer, who responded to the challenge of inventing a ghost story 'to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart' by writing a book that is still widely read, and which has inspired innumerable adaptations for screen and stage.

John Ginman
April 2016

Illustration for Cornhill Publishing Company, 1922 edition of *Frankenstein*



Story

Frankenstein was the first story Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley ever wrote. The original version was published in 1818, and was rapidly reimagined as a stage play that was hugely popular. Many other theatrical adaptations followed. The first edition of the book was published anonymously. Sometimes women needed to do this to counter negative reactions from the male dominated publishing industry. Writing as a profession was very uncommon for women at this time. A second edition, published in Paris in 1823, did cite Mary as the author.

A further edition in 1831, saw Mary make significant changes, in particular toning down the insinuation of something controversial in the love affair between Victor and his adopted sister. She also changed the frame narrative; the original was structured into 3 sections, but the newer version flows through, chapter after chapter.

The original version had an extract from Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost,* at its start:
Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?
This epigraph reflects the implicit questioning of religion and Christianity in her dark and complex ethical story. This was removed in later editions, perhaps due to fears of upsetting the Church.

In the preface to the 1831 edition, Mary talks of her writing process, alluding to its similarities with scientific 'creation', and of Victor Frankenstein's actions. She writes '*Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos*'. This following statement sheds some light on how she worked as a writer, drawing existing ideas together to make a story. Her ideas do not come out of nowhere, and this perhaps reflects her later successs as an editor of others' writing, her ability to rework and improve existing material. She also writes '*Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it*'.

EPISTOLARY NOVEL

The word epistle comes from the Greek, meaning letter. An epistolary novel is a story represented through a collection of different documents. They can take the form of letters, diary or log book entries, newspaper articles, medical reports and other documents. This style of writing can, like documentary film making, provide a much greater sense of realism, and when applied to a horror story such as *Frankenstein*, adds to its potency. It also enables the reader to see inside the characters' inner thoughts, without the need for a third party narrative voice.

FRAME NARRATIVE

This writing technique sets one or more stories within another, using an introductory scene and characters to 'frame' the lead story. It helps to create context and atmosphere for the main story, and provides other points of view, additional voices. It often makes for a richer and more complex story, and gives the reader layers of meaning to explore. *Frankenstein* is a story within a story within a story. We begin with Captain Walton, writing to his daughter. In his letters, he retells Victor Frankenstein's story. Within Victor's story, we hear the retelling of the Creature's story, and then we return to Walton again at the end.

Stretch

Can you think of a story or film that has a frame narrative within it?
How does this structure affect the way the story is told?
Can you think of a story or film script where multiple perspectives are told?
Why do you think Mary Shelley changed aspects of the story between editions?
What impact might this have had?
Compare the two editions and consider the impact of each version of the narrative.

Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus plot synopsis

Robert Walton, an English captain, whose boat is trapped in ice north of Russia, discovers a mysterious man, travelling across the snowy tundra of the North Pole on a dog-pulled sledge.
In letters to his sister, Walton retells the story of this man, Victor Frankenstein.
Victor Frankenstein shares his life story with Walton, his childhood in Geneva, his love for his adopted sister Elizabeth, and his friendship with Henry Clerval.
In his childhood Victor was a great reader and was fascinated with the supernatural and occult writers, whilst his adopted sister and friend are interested in poetry and romantic writing.
His mother dies, and he travels to University in Ingolstadt where he redirects his attentions to the teachings of rational science, chemistry, biology and the study of electricity.
Merging the two areas of study, that most would perceive to be in conflict, he discovers the secret of life. By robbing graves, he collects the body parts he needs to create an anatomically complete human, and uses electricity to give it life.
The Creature comes alive, but is horrible to look at, its flesh barely covering its muscles and bones. Victor is horrified and abandons his creation.
The Creature disappears, Frankenstein becomes ill and Clerval, who has come to visit, cares for him before Victor sets out to find the monster.
Victor learns of the death of his brother William, who was strangled. A family servant is accused of the murder but Victor, seeing the Creature in the same city, believes otherwise. The servant, Justine, is convicted and executed for the murder, Victor says nothing but feels immense guilt.
As Frankenstein travels on Mont Blanc, he finds the Creature who tells him his own story, learning language and human behaviour from secretly watching a family, reading and studying literature and poetry. He talks of reactions of terror and disgust from those that he encounters. He is called 'monster' and chased away and beaten.
The Creature is lonely and angry and demands that Victor make him a female companion. Victor agrees on the condition that the Creature never return to Europe.
Whilst making the companion, Victor begins to prepare to marry Elizabeth, but is conscious of the jealousy that the Creature will feel, so endeavours to complete the female first.
Tortured by ideas of the two creatures breeding and becoming a threat to society, he destroys what is working on.
The Creature, witnessing this, threatens Victor and soon after, Henry Clerval's body is found. Victor is accused of the murder but later cleared of the charges.
Despite the Creature's threat, Victor decides to marry Elizabeth, but she is murdered on their wedding night.
Frankenstein sets out to track and kill the Creature, and ends up following him across the North Pole.
At this point we are up to the present time, and Walton's letters to his sister talk of the other problems of their boat and their journey. The boat crew plan to return to England, but Frankenstein refuses to abandon his search for the Creature.
Frankenstein's health fails and he dies. Shortly afterwards the Creature is found in Victor's room, he gives a speech over the body, grieving the loss of his chance for peace and companionship, and promises to burn himself to death in the North Pole, leaps out of the window and disappears into the night.

Stretch

Why does Victor never name his creation?
What does this tell us about their relationship and the identity of the creature?

Characters

Blackeyed's production focuses on the younger characters in the novel. (See the note from writer John Ginman)

Victor Frankenstein
The scientist and scholar who, discovering the secret of life, creates a 'creature' capable of learning, loving and killing. Victor, disgusted by and ashamed of his creation, abandons it, and then finds the Creature won't leave him alone.

The Creature
Made from parts of corpses collected from graves, this intelligent and sensitive creation is brought to life and rejected by Victor. He seeks revenge against his creator.

Robert Walton
A sailor whose boat hits ice in the Arctic, where he meets Victor, pursuing the creature. Walton's letters to his sister begin and end the story.

Alphonse Frankenstein
Victor's father, who offers Victor comfort and reminds him of the importance of family.

Elizabeth Lavenza
An orphan and Victor's adopted sister, who he later marries. She is the classic Gothic novel female character, passive and patient, and ultimately the monster's final victim. In the 1818 version Victor and Elizabeth are cousins.

Henry Clerval
Victor's close friend, who nurses him back to health and to whom Victor confesses his terrible secret. Henry is murdered by the Creature, but Victor is accused of the crime.

William Frankenstein
Victor's youngest brother. He is strangled by the monster as revenge for Victor abandoning him. Victor feels immense guilt for William's death.

Justine Moritz
A family maid, adopted into the household by Victor's parents. She is incorrectly blamed for William's murder and executed, adding to Victor's guilt.

Caroline Beaufort
Caroline is taken in by Alphonse Frankenstein, who later marries her. She dies of scarlet fever just before Victor leaves for his studies in Ingolstadt.

Beaufort
The father of Caroline and a friend of Victor's father.

De Lacey, Felix, Agatha and Safie
A family of peasants near whose home the creature hides. Watching them, the monster learns how to speak and interact. When they finally discover him, they are terrified and beat him.

M. Waldman and M. Kempe
Victor's teachers at University, representing modern science. They install a passion for chemistry and physics in the young Victor.

Mr. Kirwin
A magistrate who falsely accuses Victor of Henry Clerval's murder.

Casting

Blackeyed Theatre productions are designed to tour extensively to theatres across the UK, so employ small casts playing multiple roles. *Frankenstein* is performed by an ensemble of five (four men & one woman) who divide the roles between themselves.

The Creature is a multi-person puppet, moved by three performers at the same time. See the page about puppetry to find out more.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Look at each scene in the novel and the character list. With only 5 actors on stage, see if you work out how you can cover all the characters. How many roles will each performer need to cover?
Is there a character who is in every scene and can only be played by one person?
Don't forget that the Creature needs 3 people in order to move.

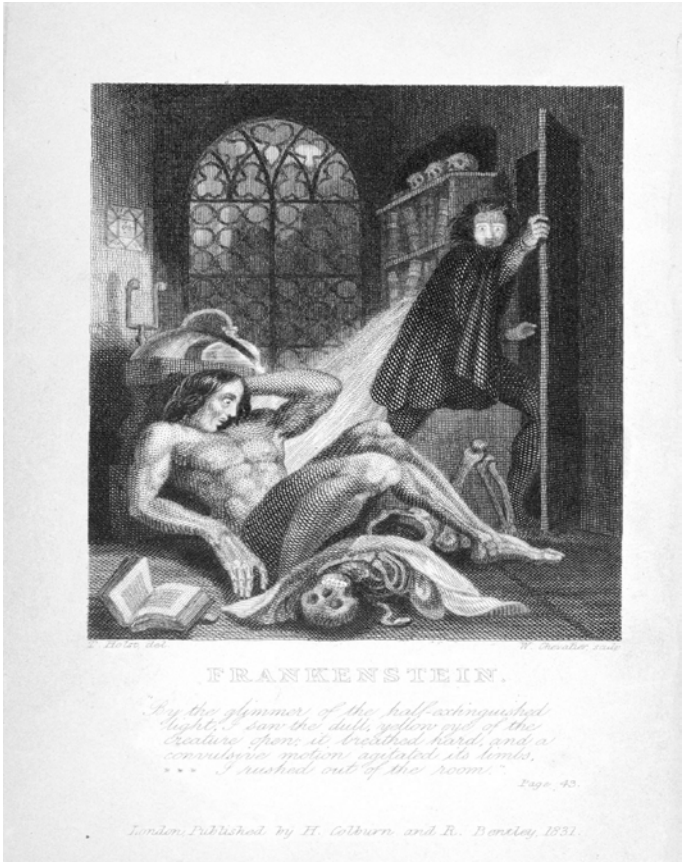
MULTIPLE ROLES

'Multi-roling' is a theatrical device whereby actors play multiple parts within a production.
This technique is frequently used to minimise the number of performers needed, and is sometimes employed to comment on a relationship between two characters.

Some directors use the technique as a challenge to the actors, and to keep performances fresh. In the recent National Theatre production of *Frankenstein* director Danny Boyle's two lead actors (Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller) swapped roles each night. They play Victor and the Creature, and this directorial decision reflects the intense relationship between the two characters, and the suggestion that the monster is a part of Victor and vice versa. This will result in the actors having a deeper understanding of the character they are playing alongside.

OCCULT

The occult means mystical, supernatural, or magical powers or practices.



Early illustrations of Frankenstein's monster
Image from The British Library

Adaptations in theatre and film

Since Frankenstein was first published, there have been more than 100 adaptations, satires, reworkings and productions for tv and film, and many more on the stage.Frankenstein's initial success as a book was helped by very popular theatrical adaptations. Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein by Richard Brinsley Peake premiered in 1823 and ran for 37 performances. It was adapted as a melodrama, and was not considered 'traditional' theatre at the time, along with other innovative forms such as puppetry, burlesque, pantomime and musicals. This was often where the most interesting and cutting edge theatre was taking place.

Mary Shelley and her father saw it together and it sparked William Godwin's decision to help Mary print a second edition of the book. In the adaptation, the creature, who is never given a name in Mary's story, is listed in the programme as -------. Mary liked this a lot, as her letter to a friend shows:

"But lo and behold! I found myself famous! – Frankenstein had prodigious success as a drama and was about to be repeated for the 23rd night at the English Opera House. The play bill amused me extremely, for in the list dramatic personae came —-- by Mr T Cook: this nameless mode of naming the unnameable is rather good. On Friday, August 29th Jane my father William and I went to the theatre to see it…. The story is not well managed – but Cooke played —- 's part extremely well ...I was much amused, and it appeared to excite breathless eagerness in the audience."

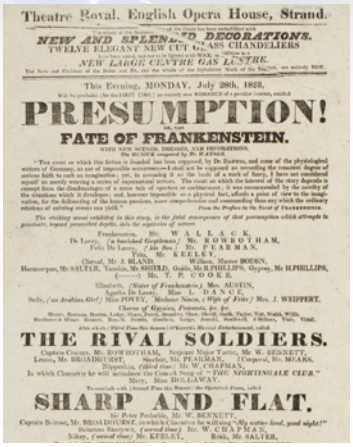
Extract from Mary Shelley's letters to Leigh Hunt, August 4th 1823.

At the same time Henry M. Milner's Frankenstein, or the Demon of Switzerland, had opened at the Cobourg Theatre. Both adaptations changed the story, focussed on different elements than Shelley had, and even added whole new characters, such as Frankenstein's assistant Fritz.

A very recent stage adaptation by Nick Dear premiered at the National Theatre in 2011, and was directed by Danny Boyle. It drew on all the dramatic presence and Gothic horror of the novel. You can watch a documentary about the making of the work, including interviews with the director, writer and actors, here.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkYgCZ0DWwc

In Nick Dear's adaptation, the Creature takes centre stage, we see the story through his eyes, his sorrow, anger and disappointment.

The first cinematic version appeared in 1910. It was a silent film and had removed anything that the makers considered might shock an audience. Since then there have been a huge number of film adaptations, each taking a different slant on the story, humorous, frightening, focussing on the science, the faith aspects or the pure horror.


Theatre Royal, English Opera House, Strand.

NEW AND SPLENDID DECORATIONS.
TWELVE ELEGANT NEW CUT GLASS CHANDELIERS
NEW LARGE CENTRE GAS LUSTRE.

This Evening, MONDAY, July 28th, 1823,

PRESUMPTION!
FATE OF FRANKENSTEIN.

THE RIVAL SOLDIERS.

SHARP AND FLAT.



Top: Playbill for performance of Presumptions; or The Fate of Frankenstein at English Opera House July 1823.

Bottom: Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's Monster in the 1931 film adaptation.

Stretch

Watch a film adaptation and compare it to the novel. Once you have seen Blackeyed Theatre's productions, compare that to the film as well. What differences do you see and what do you think the reasons were for those different choices in adaptation. Why might different adaptations at different times in history focus on different aspects of the story? What does it say about the novel that there are so many adaptations? And what do you think Mary might have thought of them? Find the full version of Mary's letter to Leigh Hunt, what else does she say about the adaptation? Write your own review of the film adaptation you watch, reflecting on staging, performance and adaptation, as Mary does in her review.

The Gothic Novel

Gothic writing combines both romance and horror and was hugely popular throughout the late 1700s and 1800s. In the Victorian era it shifted form and writers became increasingly more creative. With the supernatural and love always at their heart, tales from Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde and Elizabeth Gaskell all drew on the public's interest in the unexplained and the romance of eternal love. Using landscape, dramatic weather, tragic events and tempestuous journeys, love stories and supernatural thrillers were brought to life. You can still see many of these techniques in modern writing and films.

Gothic novels often centre around a vast frightening building or castle, sweeping epic, remote landscapes and vulnerable women, overcome by powerful sexual predators, men or monsters.

SEXUAL POWER

Fantasies in Gothic novels are often played out through 'monsters' and women succumb to powerful men and physical lusts. *Frankenstein* explores a possibly incestuous relationship, a strange love between the Creature and his master, and the Creature's own irrepressible sexual desire. There are interesting parallels between this and the sexual 'freedom' that Mary and her female friends were beginning to experience at the time. Although what might have felt free, being able to have affairs or to live as a single woman for example, would, in reality, leave women destitute and socially outcast, without a comparable impact on the men involved.

Many Gothic novels draw on three key themes, the supernatural, the uncanny and the sublime:

THE SUPERNATURAL

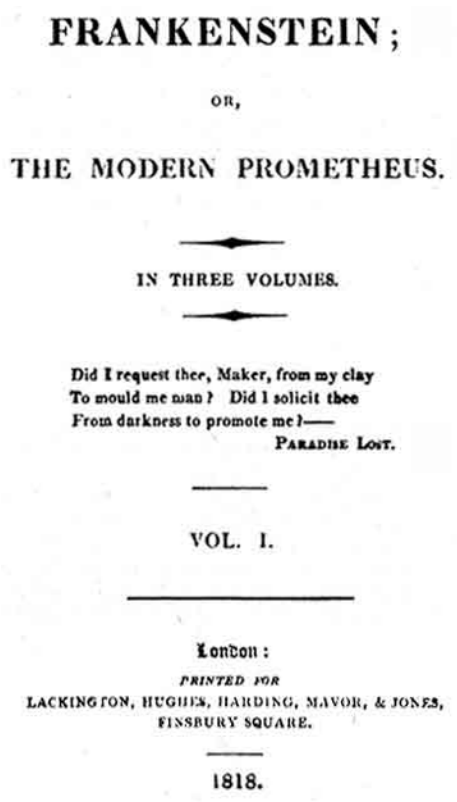
Supernatural elements are vital to a Gothic novel; ghosts, monsters, the devil, and the breaking of laws of nature, to confuse and frighten the human characters.

THE UNCANNY

A Freudian term, used to explain that strange, uncomfortable feeling about something not quite human. It explains why we often feel frightened by dolls, masks or automatons.

THE SUBLIME

Expresses great human emotion. It often marries that in literature with stunning landscapes or weather. Finding beauty in unusual scenes is common in Gothic novels. Rather than portraying beauty in a calm peaceful sunset, instead characters find themselves in the heart of a storm, or the midst of a terrifying forest at night, situations that are often frightening or overwhelming.


FRANKENSTEIN;

OR,

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?—
PARADISE LOST.

VOL. I.

London:
PRINTED FOR
LACKINGTON, HUGHES, HARDING, MAVOR, & JONES,
FINSBURY SQUARE.

1818.

Front Cover for The Modern Prometheus
1818 (Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones)

Gothic writing often appears at times of political, religious or social change in society, perhaps as a way to try and explore the upheaval, and to safely reflect on the ethical discussions taking place.

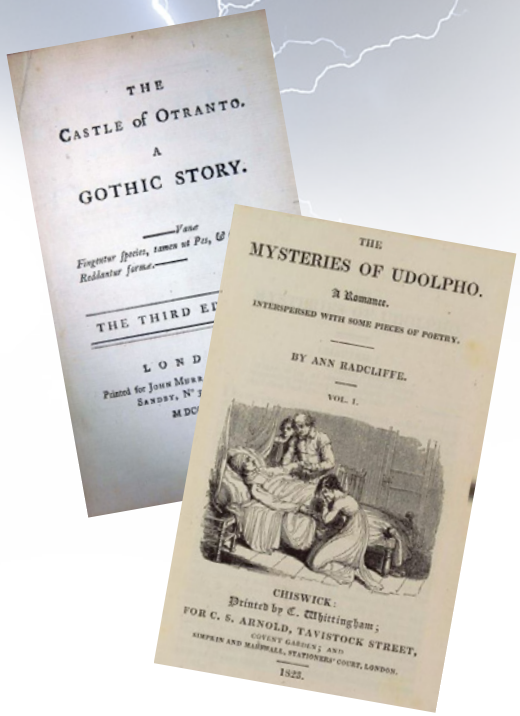
The first time the word 'Gothic' was used as a description for literature was in Horace Walpole's story *The Castle of Otranto*. He created an elaborate, fake backstory for his work, pretending it was an ancient relic, several hundred years old. Gothic fiction often draws on the past, old fashioned ways of living in contrast to the modern world of the characters, or ghosts or spirits from a long time ago. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a good example of this.

Thirty years later Ann Radcliffe used the term and the techniques in her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which featured a mysterious ancient Italian castle and a sinister villain. In fact, all of Radcliffe's novels are set in foreign countries, often with brooding landscapes, characters and vast epic scenery. Through her characters she combined the Gothic, with the Romantic.

A second wave of Gothic novels in the second and third decades of the 19th century established new conventions. Including the introduction of a 'double', a doppelganger, or shadow of yourself that follows you relentlessly, a metaphor for conscience, or death or perhaps one's soul.

Character's being pursued by their doubles occurs throughout Gothic writing. The most famous example is Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson.

'Man is not truly one, but truly two'
Robert Louise Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*





Images
Top: Front cover of The Castle of Otranto and The Mysteries of Udolpho.
Right: Image from the stage adaptation of Gothic novel Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde where Richard Mansfield played dual roles. (1895)

YOUTUBE

Watch this useful youtube video from the British Library which explains Gothic themes and ideas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNohDegnaOQ#t=244



Stretch

Read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and explore the contrast between the old fashioned life in Dracula's castle, with the busy modern world in London. What comment is the author making in this contrast?
What parallels are there between *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*?

Science

Mary Shelley was writing in the very early 1800s, on the cusp of great discoveries and advances in science, medicine and astronomy. These advances began to resolve previously unanswered questions and raised many more.

The 1700s and 1800s saw rapid scientific progress, that revolutionised European life. Science was answering many of the questions that people had believed to only be explainable by divine power and miracles and therefore the nature of religion itself began to change.

The 1700s in Europe is often described as the Age of Enlightenment, a time when rationality and reason had a swell of support, and the overwhelming power of the Church began to be questioned. The greater acceptance of the objectivity of science enabled scientists to raise concerns about the practice of spiritual healers and village doctors who used magic and prayer to cure illness.

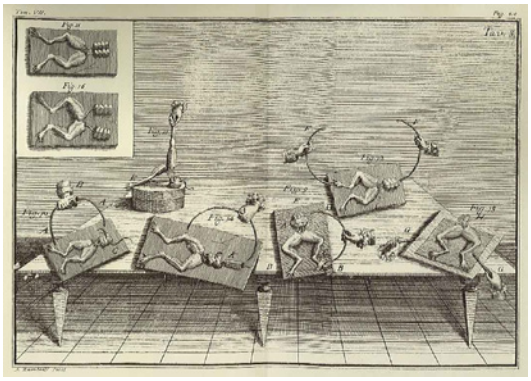
The Enlightenment also saw politicians, philosophers and writers begin to call for greater tolerance, liberalism and the critical questioning of inequality; the dissatisfaction in unequal power systems fuelled world changing events such as the French Revolution. This period of great change raised many debates and fierce conflict in academic circles, along with a great wealth of writing and creative output.

Mary Shelley reflects this conflict in her writing. Victor Frankenstein is inspired in his early adult life with the writings of occult, magical philosophers such as Cornelius Agrippa, who was publishing work in the 1400 – 1500s, explaining and exploring his belief in immortality, magic and the paranormal. Agrippa was a theologian, and saw the paranormal, exorcisms, incantations and magic as part of faith.

Electricity in Europe at the time

Luigi Galvani 1737 – 1798	He studied the impact of electricity on the human body.
Allesandro Volta 1745 - 1827	Volta invented a machine that creates static electricity, and the first chemical battery, providing continuous electrical output.
Michael Faraday 1771 – 1867	He discovered that magnets and copper wire created an electrical current.
André-Marie Ampère 1775 – 1836	Ampère discovered electromagnetism.
Humphry Davy 1778 - 1829	An English scientist who invented the first electrical light bulb.

Luigi Galvani discovered that muscle tissue reacted to electricity. He experimented on dead frog's legs, passing electrical currents through them and witnessing the muscles reanimate, making the legs twitch. This discovery led to Allesandro Volta inventing the electric battery.



A sketch illustrating some of the experiments carried out by Galvani on frogs. (1791)

Faith

Mary Shelley opened her original text with a quote from Milton's Paradise Lost, an epic poem about Adam and Eve, the origins of the devil and the fall from paradise, when they are tempted to eat the fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?

There are many questions about faith in this complex novel. Many people see the creature as a metaphor for human kind, created by God and abandoned on the earth to struggle and suffer. This is a challenging analogy to make for Christianity, because in this analogy Victor is God, a failed, frightened and unethical man, flawed, imperfect and ashamed of his creation. Humans then, portrayed by the creature, are an accident, an experiment gone wrong. In this analogy, humans have been abandoned and, in anger, commit atrocities to attempt some kind of revenge.

Some see Victor's plight as an analogy for man challenging God/religion itself, like the revolutionary writers and philosophers of the time. By creating life himself, he is rendering God unnecessary and questioning the very sanctity of life.

PROMETHEUS

Mary's full title for the novel was *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*.

Prometheus is an ancient Greek myth. Prometheus modelled man out of clay, much as God does in the Bible. Prometheus loved his creation more than the other gods with whom he resided on Mount Olympus. When Zeus demanded that humans give animal sacrifices, Prometheus tricked Zeus, wanting to protect the humans. Angry at being tricked, Zeus punished man by taking away the gift of fire. But Prometheus lit a torch from the sun and brought fire back. Zeus, even angrier, sent Pandora, the first woman, whose curiosity unleashes the existence of evil, suffering and misery on the world. Zeus further punishes Prometheus by chaining him to a rock, where he was tormented daily by a giant eagle tearing at his liver. As Prometheus is immortal in this story, his liver regenerates each night, only to be eaten again the next day.

There are many parallels between this story and the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but in this story the gods are vengeful, spiteful and cruel. It talks of punishment of humans, and the abuse of power.

Stretch

What is Mary Shelley saying about religion and Christianity by linking it to the story of Prometheus?
What current political events are using religious statements to talk about the sanctity of life?
What world events can you think of that use religion as an excuse to take life? What world events can you think of that use religion as excuse NOT to take life?
What does the Milton quote mean? How does it reflect a parent/child relationship and what is this saying about God and humankind?

Philosophy

There are many ethical debates that see religion and science in conflict. For example, debates around abortion, euthanisia, stem cell research or cloning often draw in faith based arguments about the sanctity and preciousness of life. Ethical debates like this one touch on themes similar to the ethical debates inherent in *Frankenstein*. One of the conflicts between faith and science lies in the religious belief in things that break the laws of nature and science. A scientific understanding of a human being would suggest that life ends once the body and brain are dead. Some faiths would suggest that an element of the human identity can carry on beyond death, that there is an afterlife. Some faiths require a belief in miracles; a person defying natural law by walking on water or turning one matter into another. The more science advances and we understand how the world works, the harder it is for some people to believe in miracles. Others see them merely as a metaphor or story to explain moral meaning, and that they are not in conflict with scientific understanding.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

In groups select one of the enquiry topics below and explore the issues, imagining many different viewpoints, even if they are not your own, until you feel you are closer to an answer. Try to always justify your statements, be open to changing your mind in the light of a better argument, identify and define concepts and notice the difference between fact and opinion.

Human Rights
Victor has created life but is this life sacred, like other human life? Does the creature have the same rights as other humans? Are all humans equal? Are rights independent of our actions, or do we only have them if we behave well? Does a criminal have the same rights as others?

The Soul
John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* argued that human beings are a blank slate at birth, a 'tabula rasa'. Identity is formed, not through the God-given gift of a soul whilst in the womb, but through learning and mimicking family and society. What do you think about individual identity, are we a combination of what we have learnt and experienced, or is there an aspect of us that is more than the sum of our parts, a soul or a spirit? Could this exist after the body is no longer present?

Responsibility
Victor feels a responsibility to his creation, despite abandoning it initially. Does a parent have an innate responsibility to their child, and is that greater if they are genetically related? Are we a product of nature, or nurture or both, or neither? If we are dictated by our genes, are we in control of who we are? If we are a product of society, are we to blame for our actions? Is a parent responsible for the actions of their child? If not, why does the current government fine parents if children fail to attend school?

The Individual
Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, was an important part of the philosophical Utilitarian movement. He believed that emotion should not play a part in how we decide what to do, instead we should rely purely on reason. What implications would this have for concepts such as compassion, caring, family, empathy? How would you decide who to rescue from a burning building, a single member of your own family or a group of 300 strangers, some of whom will be 'good' people and some will be 'bad' people?

Feminism

Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was one of the first female writers to publish work about gender equality. Her 1792 publication, is heralded as the starting point of published writing about the subject. In this work she recognised that education was the key to equality between the sexes.

In the 1700s children from working class backgrounds would be educated for a few years. Middle class boys were most commonly educated in grammar schools, but girls would be educated at home. This meant that most girls did not receive any formal education beyond a young age. Where there were schools for girls, they often focussed on sewing, cooking and fashion.

This was a system set up by men, who held all positions of power. Mary Wollstonecraft believed that these few powerful men were withholding equal access to equal education for women, in order that they remain in power over women. This was a conscious and deliberate system of disadvantage.

Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin also had revolutionary ideas for his era, questioning the extreme class divides in England and the power and privilege of the artistocracy.

In 1897 Millicent Garrett Fawcett founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Their aim was to change gender inequality in society, through campaigning, writing and lobbying political leaders (who were all men). Her work is continued today by the Fawcett Society.

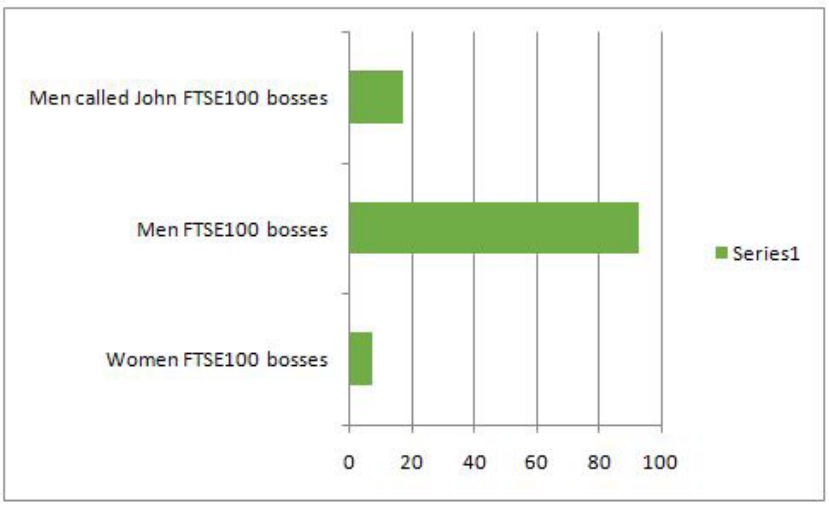
Mary Shelley was also a pioneer, as an early female writer. Society still expected women to remain in the home, be educated in domesic chores, maintain the home, and engage in social activities. Rousseau, a famous philosopher, argued in Emile, his treatise on education, that women should only be educated for the pleasure and entertainment of men. Women did not have careers without great struggle, and some women writers published work under male pseudonyms, fake names, in order to avoid publishers rejecting their work based on gender.

Over the following two hundred years, women and men have continued to fight for equal rights for all human beings, regardless of their gender.

However, even today women are still unequal in society in many ways. For example, women are hugely under represented in positions of power. In fact there are more men named John in charge of FTSE100 companies than there are women in the whole list.

Definition:
FTSE 100 is an index of the financially largest 100 companies currently listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Source: Guardian 06/03/2015





Millicent Fawcett (fourth from left, bottom row) at a Suffrage Alliance Congress, London 1909

Today, in the UK women are still paid between 10% and 34.5% less for the same work as their male colleagues.

Pay gap

- The full time gender pay gap is 10%, and the average part-time pay gap is 34.5%.
- It is estimated that for each year a mother is absent from the workplace her future wages will reduce by 5%.
- Approximately 70% of people in national minimum wage jobs are women.
- 54% of women working part-time have been found to be 'employed below their potential', which amounts to 2.8 million women. (http://ukfeminista.org.uk/)

Gender inequality is far greater however, in other parts of the world. Fewer girls than boys are attending school and girls are subject to far greater violence, oppression, arranged marriages and domestic slavery than boys worldwide. However, many countries that you might expect to be doing badly in gender equality for women are actually doing better than the UK. The UK does well in equality on education and health, but badly on political and financial equality, whereas in Rwanda, 64% of the members of parliament are women putting it in the top ten globally. The UK comes 56th in that list, just below Kyrgysztan.

SEX & GENDER DEFINITIONS

Sex - a person's sex is determined by their genetics or anatomy at birth. People can be male or female or intersex. Intersex is a term used for someone whose anatomy does not fit into the pre-determined categories of male or female, a person may be born with both reproduction organs, or neither.

Gender - gender is a term used to describe a person's own sense of themselves as male or female or on a spectrum between the two. A person's gender can be fluid, and may be represented in how they dress, behave or choose to describe themselves. A person may be assigned a sex at birth but feel their gender is different. Gender is not related to sexuality. Genders are expressed differently in different countries and cultures and it changes over time. Some find societal expectations of how a certain 'gender' should behave or dress to be oppressive or excluding.

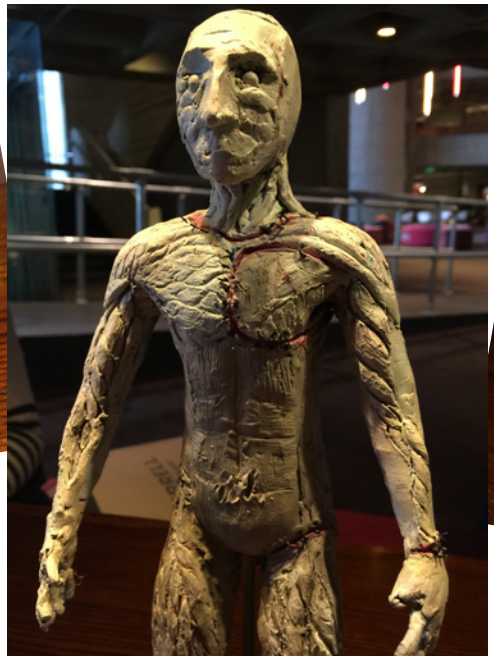
Stretch

Try researching other gender related statistics for the UK, what surprises do you find? Can you think of reasons why there might be these disparities.
What about sex and gender around the world, how are women disadvantaged in other countries and continents? What about men?
What inspiring gender activists can you find out about, try to find someone from each continent. What actions could you take to promote gender equality in your school or community?

Puppetry

Blackeyed Theatre is very excited to be working with puppet maker Yvonne Stone to bring the Creature to life. Here are some images of Yvonne's first models.







Images: Scale models of the puppet, also known as 'maquettes'.

Multi person puppetry

There are many different types of puppetry from across the world and many different approaches to style, technique and scale. The Creature will use a technique often referred to as 'multi person puppetry'.

Up to 3 performers will work together to bring the Creature to life on stage. One puppeteer takes the lead, often manipulating the head and chest, whilst the others share the legs and arms or left and right side of the body. They will hold these parts of the body directly with their hands, or sometimes with discreet handles.

The puppeteers must work as one person to create the illusion that the puppet is a living, breathing thing and they will spend a lot of time in rehearsal exploring different movements and gestures in order to manipulate their own element in complete synchronicity with the other puppeteers.

BREATH

One of the key principles of puppetry is the use of breath and techniques that create the impression that the puppet is breathing through gentle movements of the puppet's torso, and the performers' own breathing patterns. Using a carrier bag, see if you and a partner can make it appear to be breathing gently.

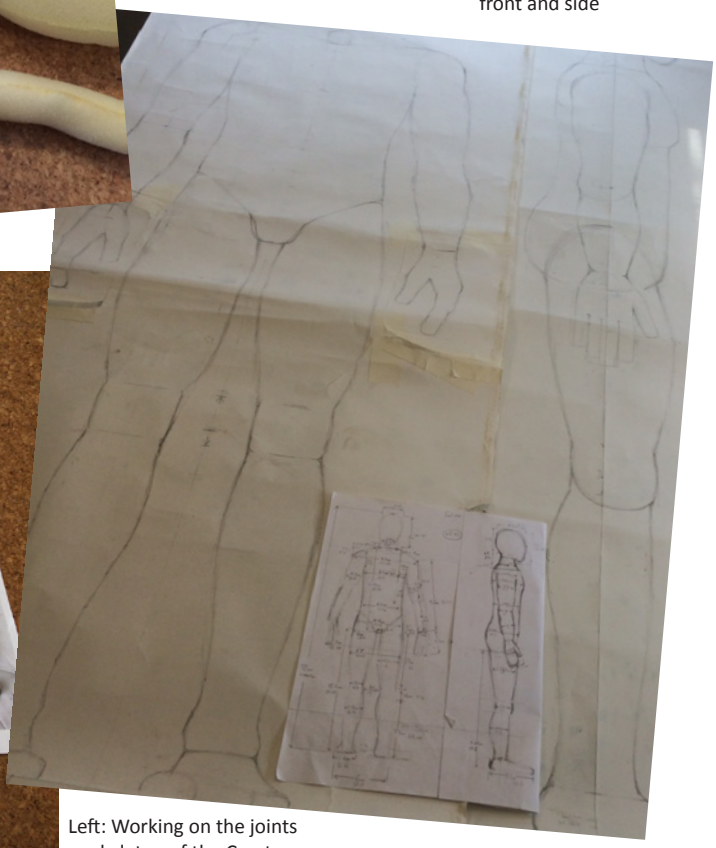
FOCUS

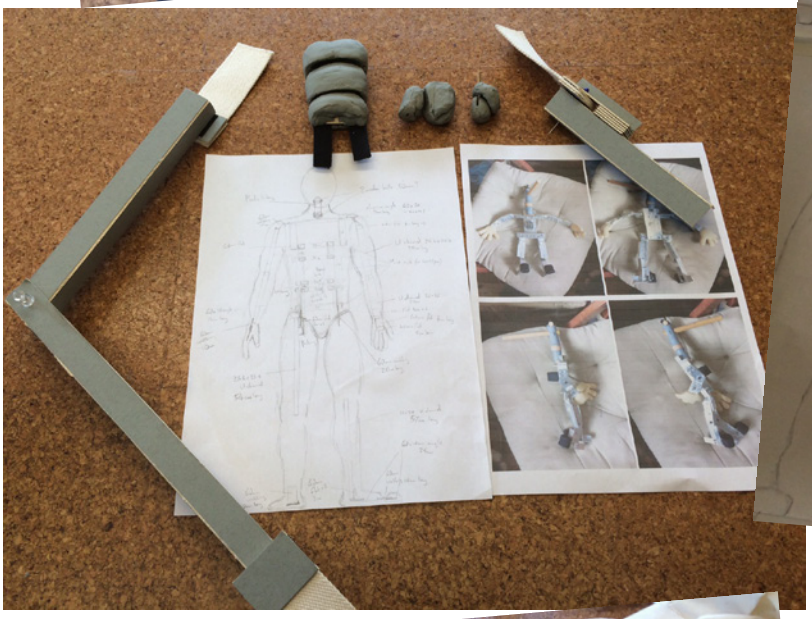
When puppeteers focus their eyes solely on the part of the puppet that they are holding, the audience's attention is drawn directly to the puppet and away from the puppeteer.
Some puppet companies play with the focus of the puppeteers and invite the audience to be conscious of the puppeteer and the puppet at the same time. Sometimes they allow the puppet to notice their own puppeteer!
Continue exploring the carrier bag, invite another person to watch. Ask that person to tell you when your bag is believable as a living thing, and when it isn't. What difference does it make if the puppeteers look at the bag, or if they look elsewhere. Can your bag puppet acknowledge you, the puppeteer and still be believable to the audience?



Left: Experiments

Below: Full scale drawings
front and side





Left: Working on the joints
or skeleton of the Creature



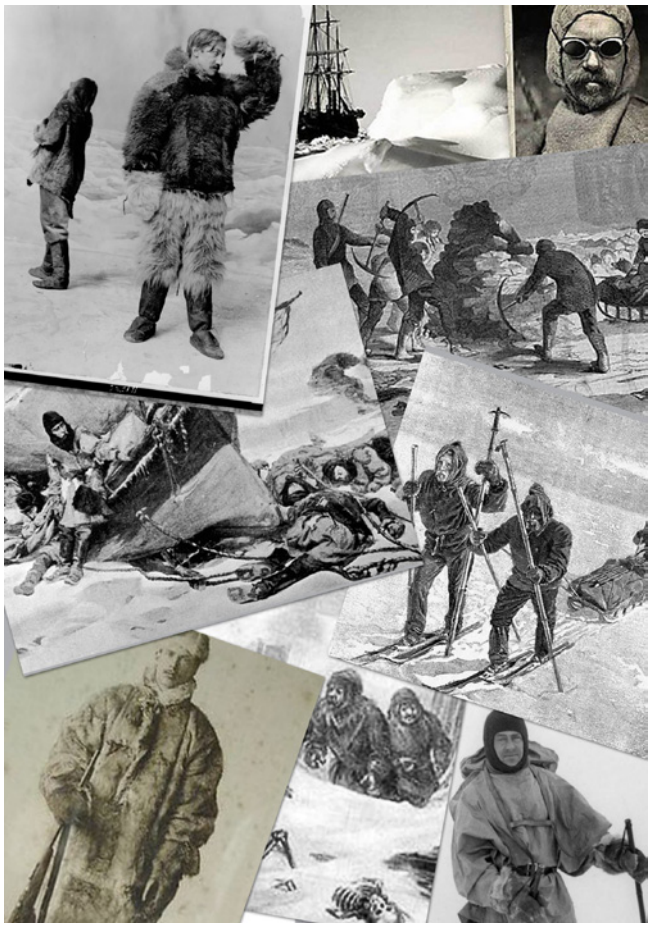
Above: Materials colour pallete

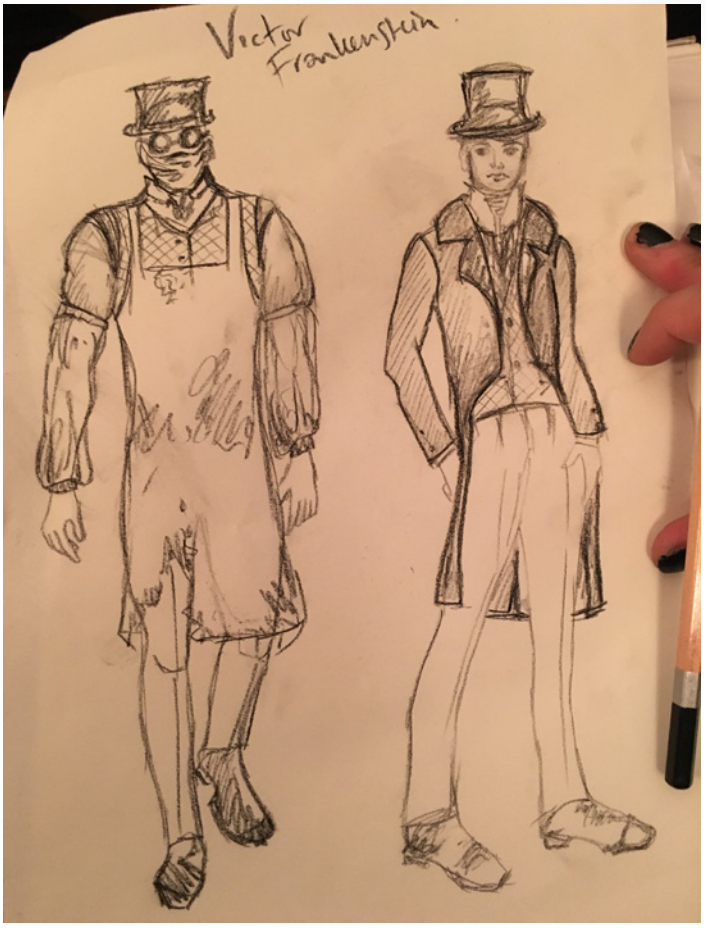
Below: Research

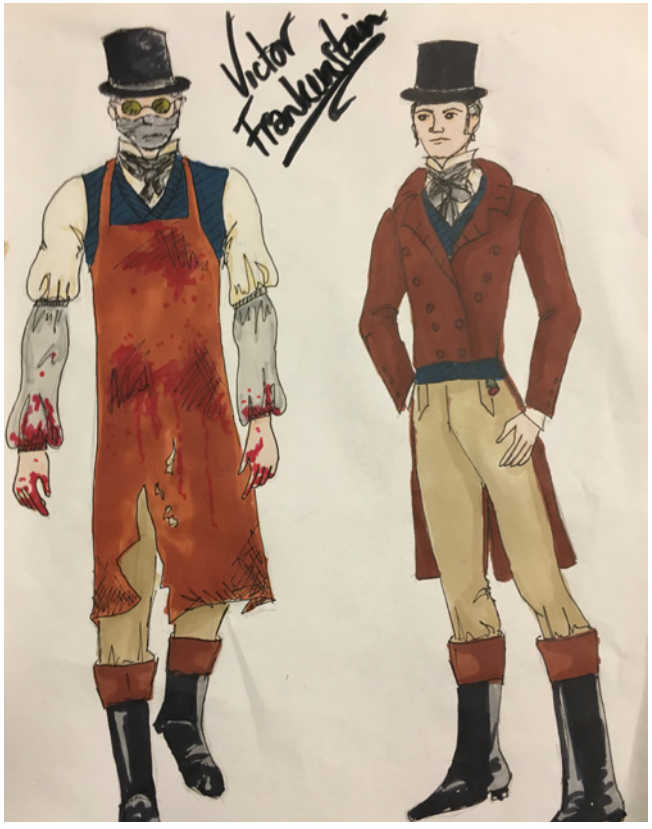


Costume

Anne Thomson creates mood boards and illustrations of costumes during the design process.





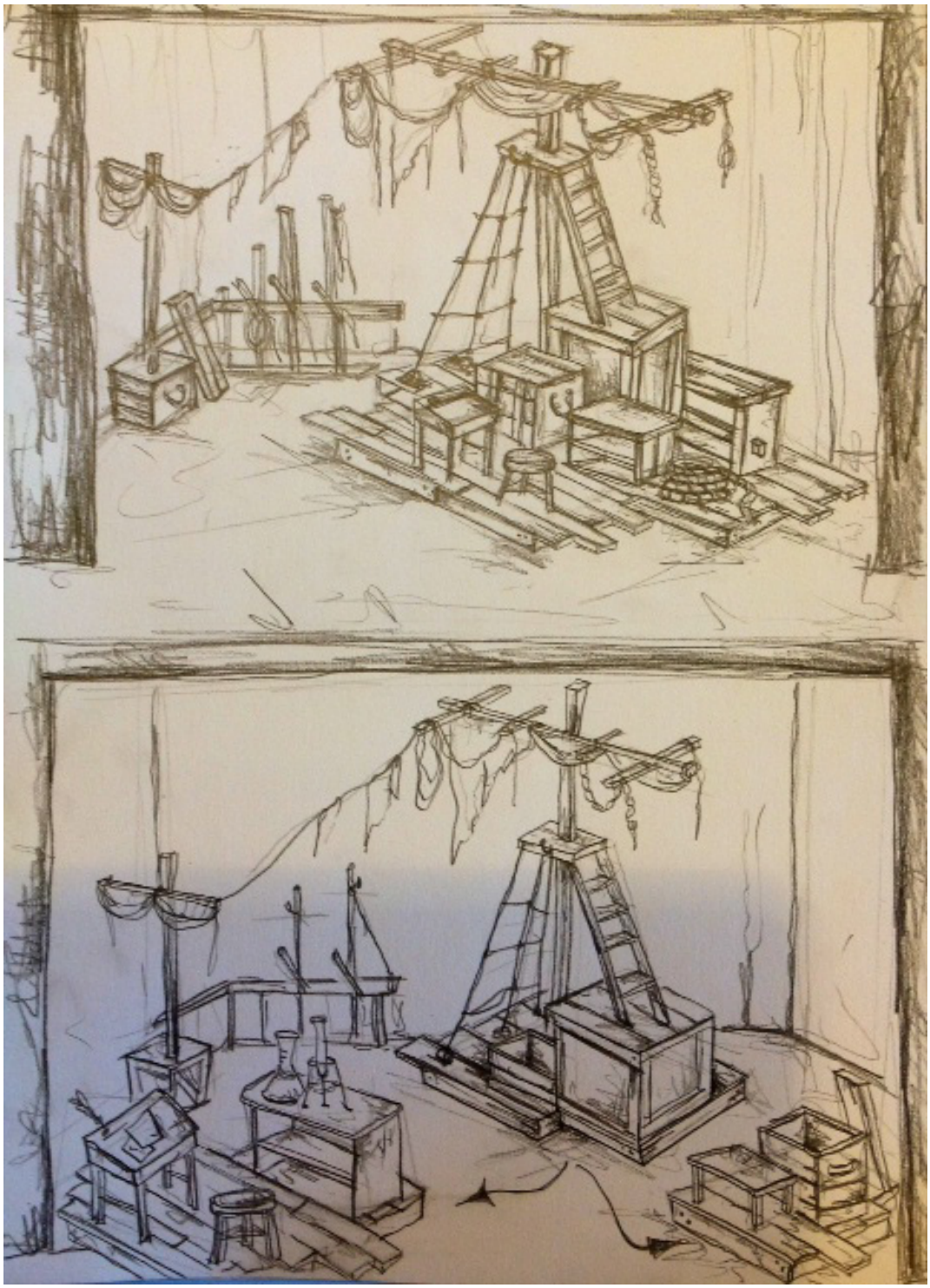




Set

Here are two initial design sketches by set designer, Victoria Spearing.

The top image shows the starting position; a ship's mast (4 m in height at most) with a ladder one side leading up to a hook the puppet can be hung on to be burnt at the end, and ropes on the other side against which the puppet could be held against to look like he is climbing. Around the base is a pile of crates, furniture, planks etc to create different story telling locations. It could look like a big tree if lit from behind. There is ship dressing / fence upstage right as an area for costume or instruments. The second picture shows the pile of crates / furniture broken apart - small trucks which split off like the cracks in the ice to be used for different locations.



Watching the show

We hope that you are looking forward to your visit to see Blackeyed Theatre's production of *Frankenstein*.

In order to maximise your students understanding of the show we have created a number of questions about the different 'lenses' through which your students can watch the show. These lenses allow the students to focus in on the performance elements, and analyse them in the moment.

Some students may find it helpful to make notes during the show, others may prefer to concentrate fully on the production and make notes afterwards. You can also choose whether to allocate groups to look specifically through different 'lenses' during the show, or ask all students to cover all areas.

LENSES

Performances

How do the actors share the roles?
How does the audience identify the characters?
How would you describe the acting style/s?
Is there a particular performer that stands out and why?
Identify the vocal techniques used throughout the show.
How do the actors physicalise the characters?
Are some characters more stylised than others, and why?
Observe the choreography within the piece?
How is the 'ensemble' used?
How have the cast created the 'visual' images within the piece?

Story

What happens in each scene?
Is the story clear?
Break the story down into different sections.
What happens during the transitions?
What themes are apparent?
Identify moments of tension, suspense, conflict, how did these engage you as an audience member?

Music and Song

Where is song used within the show?
What effect does this have on your understanding of the story?
How would you describe the style of music?
Which actors play which instruments?

Visual Design

Set
Sketch the main scenic elements
How are the different places created?
Why does the set look the way it does?
What are the visual qualities of the set?
What moves and what is static?
How are the projections being used?

Lighting
How does the lighting create atmosphere?
How is lighting used to help tell the story?
Can you identify lighting techniques used in the show?

Costume
How have costumes been used to help indicate different characters?
Where and when do the characters change costumes?

Post production

NOTES

As soon as possible after you have seen the production (the same evening or the next day is ideal) encourage your students to sit down and make some detailed notes about the show.

Sketch the scenic elements and the layout for different scenes and moments of action that stood out. Consider techniques that you really enjoyed.
Identify moments that challenged you, that you didn't understand or made you think.
Run through the production elements 'lenses' and write as many facts
about these areas as you can, consider facts as well as subjective opinions.
Imagine you are writing a review for a local paper, what might a potential audience member want to know before going to buy a ticket?

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Snowball

1. Pair up your students and ask them to discuss their favourite moments from the production
2. Then ask them to pick one of those moments
3. Ask them to come up with a question that they would like to ask the director about that specific moment?
4. Merge pairs with another pair to form groups of four
5. Ask each pair to share their questions, and decide on one of those questions to take forward
6. Merge groups of four together to form groups of 8 and repeat the negotiation exercise
7. Continue to merge groups until one large group is formed and the whole group has decided on one question that they would like to ask the director about the production
8. Set a homework activity where each student has to write a detailed answer to the question

Epistolary Evaluation

Give each student, or group of students, one of the following formats, and set them the task of writing a short critical review of the production in an appropriate style to that of their format.

- diary extract
- television news article
- tabloid news article
- letter to the company
- health & safety report
- love letter
- speech
- youtube video
- Twitter status update

Collate their evaluations into one complete document.

Blog

Write a review of Blackeyed Theatre's production of Frankenstein.

Upoload the file to your school's website, create your own blogsite and send your reviews to the Director.

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