

Frankenstein and The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein: Read Alikes

It's the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein*: What better way to revisit the 1818 novel than to read not only the real thing, but also unique, new annotated or illustrated versions, creepy retellings, biographies of Mary Shelley, and other gothic tales?

***Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley (1818)**

Frankenstein, often cited as the first true science fiction novel, tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a dark and brooding man obsessed with creating life at the expense of all else. Experimentation with dead bodies allows him to create a giant monster who has the capacity for speech, love, intelligent thought, and anger for the man who created him.

***The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White (2018)**

Throughout *Frankenstein* are passive female characters who are given new life and purpose in Kiersten White's *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, a more feminist retelling. This novel tells the story of *Frankenstein* from the point of view of Elizabeth, Victor's cousin and childhood companion. In this novel, Elizabeth provides a deeper story of Victor and their relationship as one of self-preservation.

Other editions of *Frankenstein*

1. ***Frankenstein: Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds*** by Mary Shelley, edited by David Guston, Ed Finn, and Jason Scott Robert (2017)
In this volume, the classic novel is presented along with annotations and essays that exemplify and explain its ethical issues and scientific content. Original text from the first edition is dissected line by line with commentary by Charles E. Robinson, a renowned *Frankenstein* scholar, along with essays and comments by additional scholars analyzing the morals and ethics embedded within the story. What is the price we pay for knowledge? This volume poses questions at a level accessible by scientists and interested readers alike.
2. ***Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*** by Mary Shelley, Illustrated by Gris Grimly (2013)
This full-length and full-color graphic novel brings Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to life, seamlessly combining text with gothic illustrations. This volume captures the flavor of the original, starting with a series of letters, leading into scenes of the twisted tale.

Frankenstein Retellings

1. ***Victor LaValle's Destroyer*** by Victor LaValle, Illustrated by Dietrich Smith (2018)
Victor Frankenstein's monster is back, or perhaps has never gone away, in this comic retelling. Set in the United States in 2017, the monster has become the Destroyer, having given up finding love and peace and focused solely on death and

destruction. Blending elements from the Black Lives Matter Movement and current tensions of contemporary society, the monster partners with Dr. Baker, the last living descendent of the Frankenstein family who herself is angry at the injustice of having lost her son shot and killed by the police, and the two set off on a journey of destruction. Two scientists are sent to help Dr. Baker, only to realize that they must instead help and protect the world from her.

2. ***Strange Star*** by Emma Carroll (2018)

On a dark and stormy summer night, five friends meet at Lord Byron's summer house, among them Percy and Mary Shelley. After dinner they took turns telling ghost stories, only Mary had none to tell. When an unexpected guest knocks at the door, a girl named Lizzie who is covered with scars, her story is more ghostly than any Mary could have created, for she accuses Mary of kidnapping her sister! Playing on the story of how Mary Shelley originally created *Frankenstein* with a feminist twist, *Strange Star* is a strange read, indeed.

3. ***This Monstrous Thing*** by Mackenzi Lee (2017)

In this steampunk *Frankenstein* retelling, Alasdair Finch, a young mechanic whose family illegally creates prosthetics out of clockwork parts, secretly uses clockwork pieces to bring his brother back to life. His experiment is not quite as successful as he hoped – Oliver is now more monster than man. Due to the recent publication of *Frankenstein*, the experiment does not go unnoticed, and Alasdair and Oliver have to go on the run.

4. ***Teen Frankenstein: High School Horror*** by Chandler Baker (2016)

Once again beginning on a dark and stormy night, *Teen Frankenstein* combines gothic fantasy with modern day horror. Tor Frankenstein accidentally kills someone in a car accident, and being the daughter of a scientist, uses her scientific skills to bring him back to life. Although she does bring "Adam" back, he remembers nothing of his former life and does not fit in to Tor's high school life. The trouble continues when Adam's memories begin to return and corpses begin showing up around town.

5. ***Man Made Boy*** by Jon Skovron (2015)

Boy is the teenage son of Frankenstein's monster, and his life has been anything but typical. He might be an incredibly talented computer hacker, he might be in love with a girl, but he also might not be human, and he's never left the safety of his home. It's time for him to run away and face his fears in the real world.

Biographies

1. ***She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein*** by Lynn Fulton (2018)

A haunting picture book, *She Made a Monster* chronicles the night Mary Shelley invented and began to write her classic novel *Frankenstein*. Mary knew she wanted to be a writer, but the right story has not yet found her. To make matters worse, her friend Lord Byron had tasked her and others to write the scariest ghost story by the

following morning. Frustrated at her lack of creativity, Mary fell asleep and dreamed of a monster man, one that became the inspiration for *Frankenstein's* monster.

2. ***Mary's Monster: Love, Madness, and How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein*** by Lita Judge (2018)

What do you get when you combine poetic free verse with stunning illustrations and hard-hitting facts about an author? A riveting read! Sharing all of the sordid details of Mary Shelley's life, this text shares Mary's experience as a pregnant teen runaway, her scandalous behavior living with a married man, how her family disowned her, her reaction to the death of her husband, and the real story about her inspiration for *Frankenstein*. This book is not the traditional biography of Mary Shelley.

3. ***Hideous Love: The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein*** by Stephanie Hemphill (2013)

Another verse novel than tells the hard-hitting facts about Mary Shelley's life, this volume tackles her difficult childhood, the scandal stemming from her sordid love affair with Percy Shelley, her multiple miscarriages, the deaths of her loved ones, and her often dark spirits. Ultimately, it discusses the parallels between Shelley's life and the questions she grapples with to her well-known novel, *Frankenstein*.

4. ***Mary Who Wrote Frankenstein*** by Linda Bailey, Illustrated by Julia Sarda (2018)

A uniquely drawn picture book, *Mary Who Wrote Frankenstein* is an exploration of Shelley's writing process told through atmospheric art and haunting text. Touching upon the difficulties Mary had in her life starting from childhood, the book concludes

5. ***Mary Shelley: The Strange True Tale of Frankenstein's Creator*** by Catherine Reef (2018)

Mary Shelley's life eerily parallels that of a gothic tale, a tale that is brought to life in this compelling biography. Chronicling her life as series of unfortunately tragedies and misfortunes, interspersed with moments of great success.

Gothic Horror Stories

1. ***The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter*** by Theodora Goss (2017)

A manuscript "written" by Catherin Moreau tells the tale of a group of women who work together to solve a mysterious series of horrific murders. Based on characters from well-known historical stories and characters, such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Sherlock Holmes, and Frankenstein, this volume tells the story of the monsters and their daughters. Each of the women have their own secrets and stories to tell, as they stumble upon a secret society of scientists. They must discover the connection that binds them together as they work together to solve the mystery.

2. ***Strange Practice*** by Vivian Shaw (2017)

Greta Helsing has a unique job; she takes care of monsters. Following in her family's footsteps, she runs the family's odd medical practice and treats the undead roaming

the streets of London. When a cult of monks enter town and go on a killing spree, murdering both the living and the undead, Greta must find a way to stop them.

3. *The Madman's Daughter* by Megan Shepherd (2013)

A retelling of the classic *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by H.G. Wells, *The Madman's Daughter* tells the tale of Juliet, the doctor's daughter. After the accusations against her father, Juliet attempts to pick up the pieces of her life and is finally settling in to her life as a maid. When she learns that her father might be alive and doing his horrible experiments on a remote island, she sets off to find him and discover whether or not the accusations are true. When she finds him, however, she discovers she might not be as different from her father as she always thought.

4. *In the Shadow of Blackbirds* by Cat Winters (2014)

Life is bleak and fearful for sixteen-year-old Mary Shelley Black in 1918. World War I is devastating her world and the Spanish Influenza epidemic is in full swing. Everyone around her is turning to spirit photographers and séances to try and reach their deceased loved ones, yet Mary herself does not believe in ghosts, until she does. Her first love who died on the battlefield comes to her in ghostly form and draws Mary into the world of the occult. This Morris Award finalist includes archival photographs and a story eerily similar to modern day.

5. *The Name of the Star* by Maureen Johnson (2012)

A gruesome retelling of the Jack the Ripper story, this volume in Johnson's Shades of London series merges modern-day London with visions of a historical crime spree. When Rory Deveaux arrives at a boarding school in London, far from her Louisiana home, a series of murders occur around the city. The police have no leads, and Rory might be the only witness to the killer. There's only one problem, she's the only one who can see his ghostly presence, and she might be his next victim.