Nightmare on Joe's Street

About the Show

Frankenstein's monster has escaped from Mary Shelley's imagination and is wreaking havoc in Joe's apartment in Brooklyn! Joe, Sam, and Jodie warp the monster back to Switzerland in 1816 and brave ghost stories and vampires to turn reality back to fiction!

Introduction

Introducing students to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* can help students identify the various elements of the science fiction genre. In addition, students can use the story to explore the moral and scientific limits of modern technology.

Historical Background

When Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* she launched science fiction into the mainstream of popular culture. Her story of Victor Frankenstein, a man who brings a corpse to life, affected the public's imagination in a new way. No one had written about science intersecting with life in such a vivid way before.

Even though she was only 20 years old when *Frankenstein* was published, Mary Shelley had already experienced many dramatic events in her life that led her to explore the themes in *Frankenstein.* Her father was the radical writer William Godwin. Her mother, feminist activist Mary Wollstonecraft, died days after her birth. As a child, Mary visited her mother's grave often and was fascinated by graveyards. At the age of 16 Mary fell in love with Percy Bysshe Shelley, a 21-year-old writer who was married and had a child. Despite the scandal, they ran away to live together in Switzerland. William Godwin cut off all communication with his daughter.

Curriculum Connections

- literary genres
- science fiction
- women's history

Subject Areas

- language arts
- science
- social studies



Historical Background *continued*

In 1815, Mary gave birth to a premature baby girl, Clara, who only lived for a few days. After the baby's death, Mary wrote in her journal, "Dream that my little baby came to life again, it had only been cold and that we rubbed it by the fire and it lived. I awake and find no baby." This same image, of a dead person coming to life, resurfaced when she wrote *Frankenstein.* During her life, Mary gave birth to four children but only one, Percy Jr., survived past babyhood.

In 1816, Percy Shelley's wife, Harriet, committed suicide. Mary and Percy were now free to marry and William Godwin forgave his daughter. In the spring of 1816, Mary and Percy became friends with the poet Lord Byron. While visiting his house in Switzerland, the friends—who included Byron's personal physician Dr. Polidori and Mary's younger sister Claire—became interested in ghost stories. Forced to remain indoors for several days due to rain, Byron read ghost stories aloud. When the supply of books was exhausted, Byron challenged them all to write ghost stories of their own. Mary Shelley had difficulty coming up with an idea until she overheard her husband and Lord Byron discussing a recent medical experiment in which a scientist made a dead frog's leg jump by applying an electric current to it. That night she dreamed of a scientist bringing an inanimate creature to life. This became the basis for *Frankenstein.*

Two years later, *Frankenstein* was published. It received positive reviews and Mary Shelley became famous in her own right. Mary Shelley's life was filled with many losses and she was often plagued by depression. She wrote other books, but none were as successful as *Frankenstein.* Mary Shelley died at the age of fifty-three.

Want students to get even more excited about history?



Check out the Frankenstein adventure for kids at

www.timewarptrio.com/adventures/frankenstein/

Put It Back, Jack! and other interactive games to play.

Plentifax 487—the ultimate time traveler's guide—gives more facts about Mary Shelley and Frankenstein!

Cool Books that kids will love.

Activity 1



Name It After Me

An eponym is a name word—a name that is synonymous with a person (real or fictional). Just as Frankenstein has come to mean a monster, other things have been named for the people associated with them. The Earl of Sandwich supposedly adapted a platter of meat and bread for easier eating. Amelia Bloomer shocked America by wearing pants. Alzheimer's disease is named for Alois Alzheimer and beef strogonoff for Count Strogonoff. As students work together to create an eponym dictionary, they explore the past in fiction and nonfiction.

You may find the following Web sites helpful:

homepage.smc.edu/larsen_lyle/eponyms.htm
members.tripod.com/~foxdreamer/page2.html
texaschapbookpress.com/esl.htm (quiz)
rinkworks.com/words/eponyms.shtml

Instructions

1. Introduce the idea of eponyms—name words—and give several examples. Remind students that in "Nightmare on Joe's Street," Sam tells everyone that Frankenstein was the name of the doctor who created the monster, not the monster itself. Despite this fact, the name Frankenstein has come to mean monster. Explain to students that they are going to make a dictionary of eponyms.
2. Have students work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
3. Using the "Eponyms" handout, assign a name word for students to research.
4. Have students write a paragraph explaining the origin of the word. Ask students to add an illustration (of the word or the person).
5. Ask students to present their word and explanation.

Objective

- to research word derivations

Materials

- dictionaries
- writing supplies
- "Eponyms" handout

Curriculum Standards

- **NCSS**
  Time, Continuity, & Change:
  The students will identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others.
- **NCTE/IRA**
  The students will conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources, (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

EPONYMS

America
August
batty
begonia
bloomers
boycott
Braille
cardigan
Celsius
Doberman
fahrenheit
frisbee
gibberish
guillotine
July
leotard
lynch
maverick
mesmerize
salmonella
saxophone
shrapnel
sideburns
silhouette
teddy bear

© 2006 WGBH Educational Foundation.

Activity 2

Monster Mash

In this activity, students use their imaginations to create their own "monster."

Instructions

1. Explain to students that they will be creating their own monsters.

2. Working in pairs, groups, or individually, have students use the "Your Monster's Vital Statistics" handout to consider what type of monster they want to create and what functions the monster will perform.

3. Once the questions about the monster have been filled in, students must decide how they will present the monster.

Option #1: They can create a skit and act out the way the monster moves, interacts with others, etc. If they choose this option they must write a 1–2 page script to accompany their presentation.

Option #2: They can draw an illustration of the monster with a detailed caption.

Option #3: They can write a descriptive paragraph about the monster and read it to the class.

4. Give students time to write and practice their presentations. Hold a "Monster Mash" Day so students can share their work.



Objective

- to practice descriptive writing, acting, and/or drawing skills

Materials

- art and writing supplies
- "Your Monster's Vital Statistics" handout

Curriculum Standards

- **NCSS**
  Science, Technology, & Society: Describe instances in which changes in values, beliefs, and attitudes have resulted from new scientific and technological knowledge.
- **NCTE/IRA**
  Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Your Monster's Vital Statistics

What is your monster's name?

What does your monster look like?

What does your monster sound like?

What kind of food or fuel does your monster need?

Does your monster serve any function or have any "super powers"? If so, what are they?

Why did you create your monster and what do you intend to do with it now that it is here?

Time Warp Trio © 2006 WGBH.

Resources

Recommended Books

For Teachers

The Essential Frankenstein: The Definitive, Annotated Edition of Mary Shelley's Classic Novel by Mary Shelley, Leonard Wolf, editor. (Plume, 1993)
The complete novel is analyzed and put into context.

Mary Shelley by Miranda Seymour. (Grove Press, 2002)
This extensive biography portrays Shelley as flawed but remarkably talented and capable.

Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters by Anne K. Mellor. (Routledge, 1989)
This analysis of Mary Shelley's life relies on primary sources to explore her relationship with her husband and other people in her life.

Shelley: The Pursuit by Richard Holmes. (New York Review of Books, March 2003)
This biography of Mary Shelley's husband, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, gives insight into their relationship.

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein's Creator: First Science Fiction Writer by Joan Kane Nichols. (Conari Press, 1998)
Although aimed at young adults, this biography of Shelley's life is also suitable for adults.

The Mary Shelley Reader by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Betty T. Bennett, Charles E. Robinson. (Oxford University Press, 1990)
An anthology of Shelley's work with essays about her life, letters she wrote, and a bibliography.

Fiction

Bunnicula by Deborah and James Howe. (Atheneum, 2004)
Harold the dog narrates the story of how he and Chester the cat uncover the truth about the newest household pet, a suspicious-looking rabbit with strange appetites.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. (Knopf, 1992)
The classic story, best suited for older readers.

Frankenstein Doesn't Start Food Fights by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones. (Scholastic, 2003)
The Adventures of the Bailey School Kids series. Liza, Eddie, and Melody realize that Howie is acting strangely. Are the cookies in the cafeteria tainted with a monster formula?

Frankenstein Moved in on the Fourth Floor by Elizabeth Levy. (HarperCollins, 1979)
Sam and Robert are determined to learn the truth about their new neighbor—strange Mr. Frank—and one dark and spooky night, they become more convinced that things are not what they seem to be.
See also *Vampire State Building* and *Night of the Living Gerbil* by the same author.

The Haunting Hour by R. L. Stine. (HarperCollins, 2001)
Ten stories about a terrifying baby sitter, the scariest Halloween, a vacation trip gone awry, and other horrible happenings.

Nightmare by Joan Lowry Nixon. (Delacorte, 2003)
For almost all of her 16 years, Emily has had the same nightmare.Will she find an explanation for the horrible dream at Camp Excel?

Through the Tempests Dark and Wild by Sharon Darrow. (Candlewick, 2003)
At age 14, Mary Shelley is sent to live with friends in Scotland. Based on fact, this is a fictional account of her time there.

Sorcerers of the Nightwing by Geoffrey Huntington. (HarperCollins, 2002)
The Ravenscliff series. Devon March is a young man plagued by monsters, but also gifted with special powers that he is only just beginning to understand. For older readers.

Stephen Fair by Tim Wynne-Jones. (DK Publishing, 1998)
At age 15, Stephen begins to have a recurring nightmare—the same nightmare as his brother. Stephen is determined to conquer his pain and reunite his family.

Resources

Nonfiction

Frankenstein and Other Tales of Man-made Monsters by Eric Kudalis. (Capstone Press, 1994)
A summary of the famous story introduces chapters about its author Mary Shelley, the movies and television shows it inspired, and the scientific discoveries during Shelley's lifetime that gave her the idea for the story.

Haunted House Jokes by Louis Phillips. (Penguin Putnam, 1999)
A light look at usually scary creatures, including mummies, Dracula, werewolves, and Frankenstein.

Mysterious Monsters by John Townsend. (Raintree, 2004)
Out There series. Explores monsters in myths and fiction as well as those that really exist (like komodo dragons and giant squid) and those that might exist (like yeti or the bunyip).

Mysterious Monsters: Fact or Fiction? by Terry O'Neill. (Greenhaven Press, 2004)
Opposing Viewpoints series. Evidence that four monsters (Mothman, the *chupacabras,* modern pterodactyls, and the Dover Demon) exist is presented, then refuted.

That's Weird! Awesome Science Mysteries by Kendall Haven. (Fulcrum Resources, 2001)
Sixteen mysterious and sometimes frightening topics that have given rise to legends are described, along with facts that have been verified by scientists.

Web Sites

FRANKENSTEIN
kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/shelley.htm
This scholarly site from Kingwood College summarizes the novel, and provides journal articles, Web sites, and other resources.

FRANKENSTEIN BY MARY SHELLEY
bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/a2082854
An in-depth article about the author and the book.

FRANKENSTEIN: PENETRATING THE SECRETS OF NATURE
www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/frankenstein/frankhome.html
Learn about the novel, its author, and the ways in which the story enters into debates about scientific advances.

A FRANKENSTEIN STUDY
www.watershedonline.ca/literature/frankenstein/frankenstein.html
This site examines the meaning and continuing power of this classic horror story through essays, FAQs, information, and links.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY CHRONOLOGY & RESOURCE SITE
www.rc.umd.edu/reference/chronologies/mschronology/mws.html
A chronology of Mary Shelley's life and literary works, including resources and reviews of her writing. For older students.

MY HIDEOUS PROGENY: MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN
home-1.worldonline.nl/~hamberg/
Find out about Mary Shelley's life and her work.

Please note:
Although these sites were verified at the time of publication, Web site addresses and content are frequently subject to change.

©2006 WGBH Educational Foundation. All rights reserved. Time Warp Trio™ is produced by WGBH in association with Soup2Nuts for Discovery Kids. Major funding was provided by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these classroom materials do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Based on THE TIME WARP TRIO book series written by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith. Time Warp Trio is a registered trademark of Chucklebait, LLC. Used with permission. Third party trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Used with permission.