

Worksheet 1 – Mary Shelley

Recall

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. Why was Mary Shelley raised by her father?
 - a) Her mother died soon after her birth
 - b) Her parents divorced
 - c) Her mother eloped with Percy Shelley
 - d) Her mother was too busy with her career as a writer
2. Where did Mary meet the poet Percy Shelley?
 - a) Switzerland
 - b) In church
 - c) Scotland
 - d) At her mother's graveside
3. In which country was *Frankenstein* conceived?
 - a) England
 - b) Switzerland
 - c) Sweden
 - d) Scotland
4. In which year was *Frankenstein* first published?
 - a) 1797
 - b) 1831
 - c) 1818
 - d) 1851

Bonus point: On which date was it published?
5. In the lecture, Prof. Groom discusses changes that Shelley made to the 1831 edition of the novel. Which of the following alterations is incorrect?
 - a) The opening chapters were extended
 - b) Victor and Elizabeth were no longer blood relatives.
 - c) Some of the science was removed.
 - d) An element of the divine (God) was introduced.

Analysis

6. In the lecture [2:09-3:45], Prof. Groom mentions that Shelley spent many hours sitting at her mother's graveside, reading Mary Wollstonecraft's works.
 - a) Why do you think Shelley chose to sit by her mother's grave as she read her books?
7. Read the excerpt below and then answer the questions which follow.

"For Mary, even more than for most writers, reading a book was an emotional as well as an intellectual event of considerable magnitude. Especially because she never knew her mother and her father seemed to so definitively reject her... her principal mode of self-definition was through reading. Endlessly studying her mother's works and her father's, Mary Shelley may be said to have 'read' her family and to have been related to

her reading, for books appear to have functioned as her surrogate parents, pages and words standing in for flesh and blood.”

Gilbert, S. 1978. *Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve*. Feminist Studies. Vol 2. p.50

- a) Why does Gilbert think that Mary Shelley read so much? (Try to find at least 2 reasons)
- b) What does Gilbert mean when she says that Mary Shelly “*read*” her family”? Can you explain the double meaning in this statement?

Evaluation

7. In the lecture [2:09-3:45], Prof. Groom discusses the influence of Mary Shelley’s time spent in Switzerland on the novel.

Research the Swiss landscape that inspired Shelley (the Alps and storms over Lake Geneva) and select an image that helps you imagine the environment she experienced.

Write a short paragraph explaining why the environment from your chosen image is the perfect setting for a story about the supernatural.

Hint: Use this website to get you started.

<https://www.wired.com/story/searching-for-frankenstein-switzerland/>

Challenge: Using your image as a prompt, write your own opening paragraph to a ghost story.

Glossary

- **Elope** (verb) – To run away secretly to get married
e.g. Their parents did not approve of the marriage, so they eloped.
- **Supernatural** (adjective) – Something that cannot be explained by science. Often relating to ghosts, spirits, magic, or God.
e.g. He was convinced he had seen a demon, or some other supernatural being.
- **Atheistic** (adjective) – Not believing in the existence of God.
e.g. He stopped going to church, since he had decided he was atheistic.
- **Principal** (adjective) – Main; first in order of importance.
e.g. Making phone calls was her grandmother’s principal way of staying in touch.
- **Self-define** (verb) – To discover your identity; to find out who you truly are and what you believe in.
e.g. The teenage years are an important time of self-definition.
- **Surrogate** (noun) – A substitute. Often used in relation to women who give birth to a child for another woman.
e.g. Due to her poor health, she decided it would be safer to find a surrogate to give birth to her third child.