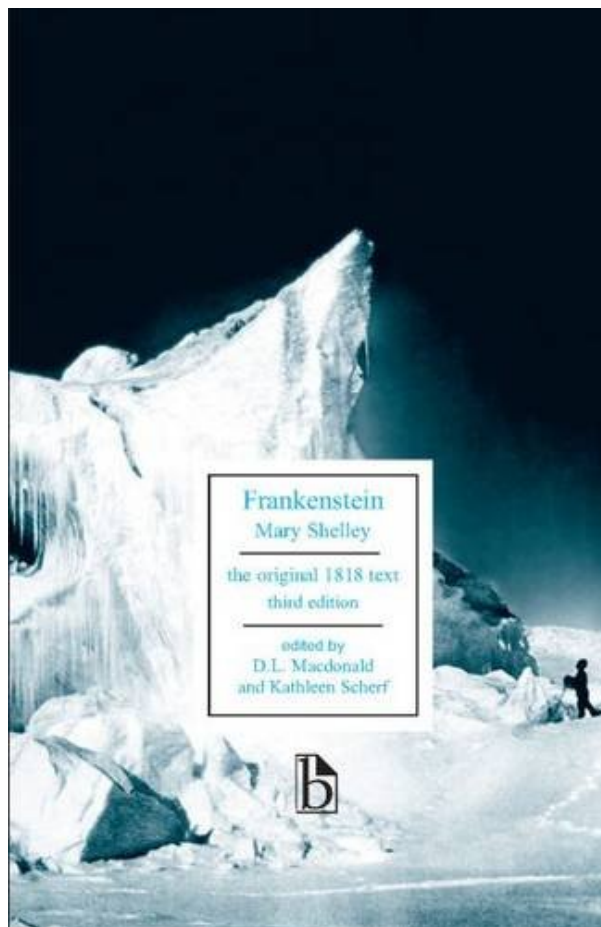
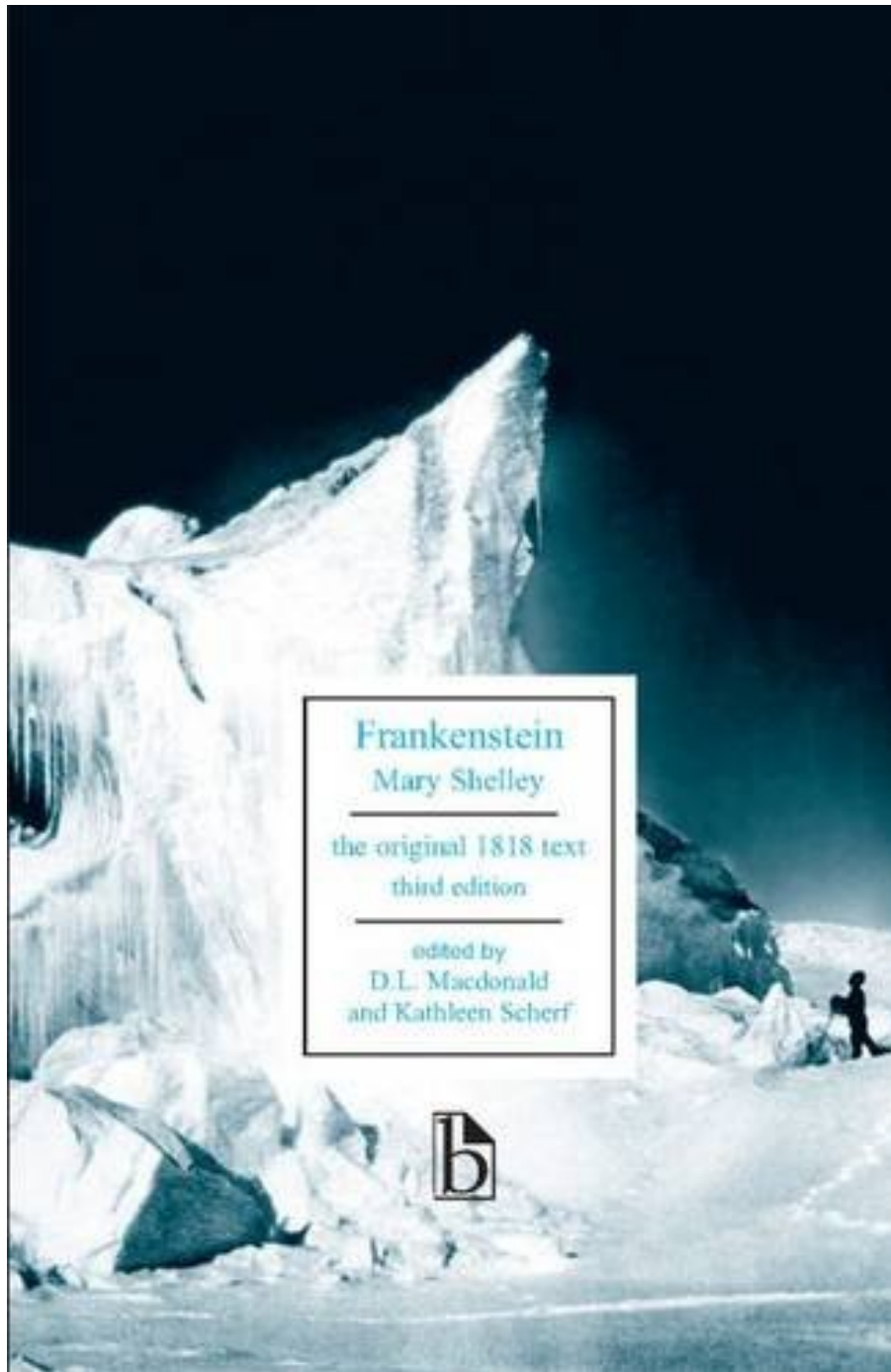


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Amazon.com Review

Frankenstein, loved by many decades of readers and praised by such eminent literary critics as Harold Bloom, seems hardly to need a recommendation. If you haven't read it recently, though, you may not remember the sweeping force of the prose, the grotesque, surreal imagery, and the multilayered doppelgänger themes of Mary Shelley's masterpiece. As fantasy writer Jane Yolen writes of this (the reviewer's favorite) edition, "The strong black and whites of the main text [illustrations] are dark and brooding, with unremitting shadows and stark contrasts. But the central conversation with the monster--who owes nothing to the overused movie image ... but is rather the novel's charnel-house composite--is where [Barry] Moser's illustrations show their greatest power ... The viewer can all but smell the powerful stench of the monster's breath as its words spill out across the page. Strong book-making for one of the world's strongest and most remarkable books." Includes an illuminating afterword by Joyce Carol Oates.

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-Full-color drawings, photographs, and reproductions with extended captions have been added to the unedited text of Shelley's novel, thus placing the work in the context of the era in which it was written. The artwork faithfully represents the text and makes this edition appealing to reluctant readers. Unfortunately, many of the captions provide tangential information that, although interesting, interrupts the flow of the story. However, readers will quickly learn that it is not necessary to read every caption and appreciate this volume for its many quality illustrations.

Michele Snyder, Chappaqua Public Library, NY

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From Booklist

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enthralled by pop versions of the myth as well as science fiction fans will be interested in going back to the full version of what has been called the first science fiction novel and learning about the circumstances under which it was written by a woman, just 18 years old, 170 years ago. Hazel Rochman

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D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf's edition of *Frankenstein* has been widely acclaimed as an outstanding edition of the novel for the general reader and the student as much as for the scholar. The editors use as their copy-text the original 1818 version, and detail in an appendix all of Shelley's later revisions. They also include a range of contemporary documents that shed light on the historical context from which this unique masterpiece emerged.

New to this edition is a discussion of Percy Shelley's role in contributing to the first draft of the novel. Recent scholarship has provoked considerable interest in the degree to which Percy Shelley contributed to Mary Shelley's original text, and this edition's updated introduction discusses this scholarship. A new appendix also includes Lord Byron's "A Fragment" and John William Polidori's *The Vampyre*, works that are engaging in their own right and that also add further insights into the literary context of *Frankenstein*.

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185 of 196 people found the following review helpful.

Choose the 1818 version

By Jim Dollar

Most editions of Mary Shelley's landmark book available today follow the heavily revised 1831 version. The impulse behind this trend is an honorable one (to present what is seemingly an author's "final revision"), but the 1818 version is preferable for many reasons. Looking back on her creation in later life, Shelley felt obliged to alter the book's focus in significant ways, adding what critic Marilyn Butler accurately describes as "long passages in which her main narrator, [Victor] Frankenstein, expresses religious remorse for making a creature..." The author sought to make the 1831 edition less controversial and thereby more palatable to the tastes of the reading public. The 1818 version is closer to Mary Shelley's original intentions, though it too, unfortunately, was filtered through the sensibilities of her husband, the poet Percy Shelley, who took many of his wife's rather straightforward passages and rendered them into his own more ornate and Ciceronian style. Still, the 1818 version remains more vital, more original, and less constrained by what the author believed would be acceptable to readers in 1830s England.

215 of 237 people found the following review helpful.

A moving, disturbing, depressing, but also touching tale

By Ian Fowler

Much like Bram Stoker's "Dracula", Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" is a story we all think we know, but really don't. Very few films have consciously attempted to follow the novel too closely (which shouldn't detract from the excellent James Whale/Boris Karloff film, or its masterpiece-sequel, "The Bride of Frankenstein"). Thus, everything popular culture "knows" about "Frankenstein" does not originate from literature, but from films. This is a shame, in a way, because the novel itself is, if not the progenitor, an early vessel of so many archetypes found science fiction and horror.

The basic plot remained intact when transferred to other media. Swiss medical student Victor Frankenstein discovers the secret of life (which he never reveals, lest someone repeat the mistake). He then puts together a body, essentially a man, from various corpses. He then becomes horrified by the creature he has built, and abandons. The creature, suffering a great deal of neglect and abuse, still manages to get a thorough education, and learns of his lineage. After murdering Victor's younger brother, and framing the family maid,

the creature tells his (admittedly) sad tale to his "father", and then demands a mate. Victor, in a panic, agrees, then thinks better of it at the last moment, destroying the new bride. In retaliation, the creature murders all of Victor's loved ones (including his wife), and leads Victor on a merry chase across the world.

Most probably know that Mary Shelley wrote this book in response to a challenge issued by Lord Byron, during a vacation at Lake Geneva. (Along with this story came John Polidori's "The Vampyre", the first English vampire novel.) Most probably also know that Shelley went on to write other works of imaginative gothic fiction. Still, her modern reputation rests with this book.

As stated, numerous archetypes (themes, plot lines, characters) are present here. The basic fear of what evil technology may bring along with the good is a central theme, as is the warning against playing God. So is the implicit admonition to be responsible in all things, be it during innovation or being a parent. The creature is, for all intents and purposes, an android-everyone from Gort to C-3PO owe their existence to the Frankenstein monster. And the monster that slays all but one protagonist is a staple of horror, be it traditional monster movies, like "Alien", or more realistic slasher movies like "Halloween".

But, as I noted at the beginning of this review, certain of these elements have been lost in most interpretations. The creature is actually intelligent, and well-spoken, quite different from the inarticulate grunts or slow, half-sentences of the movies. Further, while the films have made lightening a staple of the creature's creation, Shelley never really explains the process. Finally, one of the staples of the films is the explanation for the creature's "evil" nature. Often, the problem lies with the brain used, which almost invariably is a criminal brain, or is damaged before implantation. In the book, the creature is really a child that's horribly neglected, but with the strength and intelligence to strike back: id without superego, and without restraints.

Thus, "Frankenstein" will be a new experience for readers who know the source exclusively from the films. Unlike "Dracula", there aren't any moments where a reader might look up and suddenly realize how quiet it is in the house, or how dark it's gotten outside. In that regard, "Frankenstein" has not aged particularly well. Throughout, however, it is a moving, disturbing, depressing, but also a touching and beautiful tale. Those qualities have withstood the test of time. While it is not always a rollicking adventure, it is a rewarding read.

94 of 104 people found the following review helpful.

Kindle edition is the 1831 edition, not 1818

By MsEO

I got the free Kindle edition from the link on the page for the Norton Critical Edition of the 1818 text. Mary Shelley made many significant edits to the book for the 1831 edition. I assumed it was the same edition because the link was from the same page. I didn't realize it was different until I went to write my assigned essay and went online to search for page numbers for the passages I wanted to quote. Many of the quotes I wanted to use don't even appear in the original version. This is a very important distinction, and I wish it had been labeled correctly so I would not have had to waste so much time looking for online versions of the correct text in order to replace the quotes I could not use from the later version. This edition is fine if you just want to read the book, but if you're reading it for school, you have more than likely been assigned the 1818 version, which is very different. The Kindle edition is also lacking in any kind of Kindle formatting, making it a hassle to find locations in the book.

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