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Mary Shelley

Today we're going to talk about Mary Shelley...in just a minute.

Mary Shelley was born in London in 1797, the daughter of the feminist activist Mary Wollstonecraft and the political philosopher William Godwin.

She was just 18 when she began writing what would become one of the most influential works of literature in history. At the time, she and her future husband, Percy, were visiting their friend and fellow writer Lord Byron in Switzerland. One night, the friends challenged each other to write their scariest stories. Shelley spun a tale of an ambitious scientist who constructs a human-like creature from reanimated body parts—with unexpected and horrifying consequences. The scientist's name? Frankenstein.

Upon its release in 1818, Frankenstein was a sensation. With themes of scientific ethics, social prejudice, and the limits of human knowledge, the book is considered an early example of science fiction. It spoke to the ways that technology was beginning to transform the world at the time. Though Shelley published it anonymously for fear of backlash from sexist critics, she went on to release several more books under her own name, plus numerous articles and short stories.

Where do you see the legacy of Mary Shelley today?