

About Mary Shelley

- Born in 1797; her mother died shortly after her birth
- Grew up in a household in which the ideas and beliefs of the Enlightenment were prominent
- Listened to conversations of her father and Romantics such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Charles Lamb
- Influenced by Romanticism which placed more importance on personal feeling and intuition than on reasoning and scientific investigation, which were valued by the Enlightenment
- Was taught Latin and the sciences
- Had an active imagination and was especially fond of daydreaming
- Learned about her mother through her writings—her mother wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*—she read these over and over, often at her mother's graveside
- Despite her respect for her mother's ideas that women should have the same educational opportunities and political advantages as men, Mary

was unable to openly support these ideas as her mother had done. Her feminism was of a private rather than a public nature.

- Her life was marked by contradictions.
- She was not concerned with the social conventions of the time—she eloped at 17 with a married man, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.
- She wrote *Frankenstein* with her husband's support and encouragement. It was published in 1818.
- In this novel, she addresses two opposing philosophical movements of the late 1700s—Enlightenment and Romanticism.
- She is regarded by many as the “mother” of the science fiction genre.
- She gave “birth” to a creature who is able to evoke in readers the contradictory reactions of horror and sympathy.