

Take some dead parts. Stitch them together. On mad scientists, and toss in one lightning bolt. What do you get? Frankenstein the monster.

Frankenstein A Real Unloved Child

On October 3, 1931, Universal Studios finished shooting Frankenstein. Some notes about the motion picture that is continually one of the top 100 video rentals:

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- After the surprising hit of Dracula earlier that year, Universal wanted another film that would feature the Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi - minus his loopy accent. They bought a theatrical adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel. (The chief difference is a relatively mute monster; the book's creature is a gas-bag who has monologues running for pages.)
 - The actor, who saw himself as a romantic lead, hated the makeup and the role. He said, "I was a star in my country... Anybody can moan and grunt."
 - In the studio cafeteria, director James Whale noticed a fellow Briton: Boris Karloff. (Born William Pratt, Karloff was a black sheep from an unloving family of diplomats. His parents died when he was a child; he was raised by siblings. He took his acting name from a maternal relative.)
- Karloff's acting, a black-and-white film that was tinted green, and a shocking story (for the time) created a hit film.



The young Mary Godwin, later wed to poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, wrote Frankenstein at the age of nineteen.

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- After test screenings, Universal cut one sadistic scene in which the monster, thinking a friendly little girl will float, throws her into a lake. (Ironically, little Marilyn Harris enjoyed being chucked into the water by Karloff. In real life, her adoptive mother - who picked her out of an orphanage for her looks, motivated her acting with beatings and other sadism, writes critic Forrest Ackerman.)
- Karloff said later he got much sympathetic fan mail, especially from children, who said they understood the monster's feelings.
- Nineteen-year-old Mary Shelley started her novel after hearing a discussion about life between her husband-to-be, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron. Mary's mother died 11 days after giving birth (Mary was courted on her mother's gravestone) and she was raised by a cruel father who barely tolerated her. Critics have noted the parallel between her childhood and the monster's life. (Sources: Behind the Scenes, The Dead That "Walk, Universal Filmscripts, news services.)