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The Monsters



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Excellent book to learn more about Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Dr. Polidori and Claire Clairmont. Even though I knew a good amount on Byron and Mary Shelley beforehand, I learned quite a bit more after reading, including fascinating stories about Mary's husband, Percy. There was also a very good section about how Mary came up with the idea for Frankenstein, and the ghost story challenge that inspired it. Frankenstein lovers and horror enthusiasts alike will enjoy this. I highly recommend this book.

Great book for Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Frankenstein and Vampire enthusiasts. Read this for a humanities class. If you are interested in horror and how the genre of gothic horror, romanticism, and other monsters came about, this book - the monsters is a must read. It is an in depth, biography on all of their lives and how Frankenstein 1818 and 1831 versions came to be. Learn the true horrors behind it all.

I was a little worried when I bought this book, which had been recommended by a friend, that the writers might delve into the more salacious aspects of these writers/poets...and there was a good lot of room for that with Byron being a factor, but it was very factually presented. It's fascinating to see the buildup to the narrative of Frankenstein. The authors did an excellent job of weaving together the history to show how Mary's creation evolved. Her parents and her relationship with them. Her many losses of children. Her relationship with others. They did a really thorough platform for the influence of her life in Frankenstein. I'm not a scholar so I can't speak to its historical authenticity, but I was convinced by this...and I'd love to see similar books that delve into the "why" and "how" great classic literature came to be. While I highlighted a ton of this book, I thought this was one of the more interesting quotes: Victor Frankenstein realizes that the creature is his doppelgänger--an insight that seems to have extended to readers and audiences, for today the name "Frankenstein" is

popularly applied not only to the creator, but to the monster, who is never named in the book.

Shelley and Byron, in this case, are the "Sheldons," and a personally unlovable pair they prove to be. Genius creates art of deathless beauty, but sometimes these folks are so brilliant that the rest of us appear to them like groping bugs, easily squashed if convenient. Byron & Shelley were a pair of invincible artists, but their personal lives were a shambles. This book was a fascinating description of the dark summer which gave us both Frankenstein and The Vampire. The backstory on this group of artists was as gripping as the main story, but the interpersonal dynamics of this famous houseparty wouldn't be out of place on day time t.v. These artists lived on the edge, testing/breaking every societal limit. Both Byron and Shelley died young, blissfully unscathed. Mary Shelley, like many other intelligent survivors of such a wild scene, was the one who rehabilitated her husband's reputation, glossing over real events so that her husband's work could be found acceptable reading for the sanctimonious late Victorians. Unfortunately, Mary was also left as the person who had to endure the social opprobrium. (I'm following this with a long over-due reading of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" written by Mary Shelley's "infamous" and utterly brilliant mother.)

It's axiomatic that genius is often characterized by questionable social skills and/or behavior, and it would appear to hold true in the case of Mary Shelley's circle of family and friends. The Hooblers present unflinching portraits of Mary, her husband Percy, father William Godwin and friend, Lord Byron among others. Mary receives the kindest treatment next to her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft (Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman") Both Marys suffer at the hands of the men in their lives, and Mary the younger spends a good deal of time trying to make some sense of that suffering. But the men... they are true pieces of work. They are all selfish, self-centered, arrogant and cruel even in their affections. They seem to have little use for the women in their lives, less for the children they father promiscuously. They live for their "art" and the pleasures it buys them. And in spite of that art, they are not particularly attractive when viewed through this lens. Of the three most prominent women in the book, Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont, is the least talented and the most unpalatable thanks mostly to her single-minded pursuit of Lord Byron and her possible romantic involvement with her sister's husband, Percy Shelley. I picked up the book originally because I have long been fascinated by the events of that "haunted summer" of 1816 when Byron challenged his friends to write a ghost story. The Hooblers present those events as a kind of centerpiece to the larger story of Mary Shelley, beginning with a short but careful examination of her mother's life with an eye to how it affected Mary's life and writing. One is tempted to wonder how Wollstonecraft might

have viewed her daughter's elopement with Percy Shelley, and her writing career. As it is her death, not even a fortnight after the birth of her younger daughter, was the first of many losses that informed Mary Shelley's work. And in less than a quarter century, the younger Mary would lose three children, a half-sister, her husband and the love -- such as it was -- of her own father because of her relationship with Shelley. She would be haunted by the suicide of Shelley's first wife, Harriet, and her husband's chronic infidelities, possibly even with Claire. It's no wonder that she produced one of the most memorable horror novels ever penned.

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