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Angelmonster



Synopsis

Veronica Bennett's lush reimagining of the life of Mary Shelley — on the eve of her authorship of the classic gothic novel *Frankenstein* — is a gripping story of love and obsession. In the spring of 1814, poet Percy Shelley enters the life of young Mary Godwin like an angel of deliverance. Seduced by his radical and romantic ideas, she flees with him and her stepsister to Europe, where they forge a hardscrabble life while mingling with other free-spirited artists and poets. Frowned on by family and society, persecuted by gossip, and plagued by jealousy, Mary becomes haunted by freakish imaginings and hideous visions. As tragedy strikes, not once but time and again, Mary begins to realize that her dreams have become nightmares, and her angel . . . a monster. Now the time has finally come for the young woman who would become Mary Shelley to set her monster free.

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Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up — This enthralling novel delves into the life of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley during her tempestuous relationship with Percy Bysshe Shelley and explores the basis for writing *Frankenstein*. While many readers may have heard of the novel, most will be unaware of the underlying theological and philosophical issues with which the author wrestled. Shelley's parents were progressive thinkers, and she was raised to participate in intelligent debate with the poets, novelists, and philosophers of the day. When she was 16, she had an affair with Percy, who was married. Her stepsister accompanied them to Europe, thus beginning a convoluted set of affairs with poet Lord Byron and his friends. The Shelleys faced many tragedies, and both struggled with

depression and night terrors. However, the author portrays a great love between them that makes the story as much a romance as a psychological tale. Bennett takes liberty with a couple of events, including when and under what circumstances *Frankenstein* was written, but, ultimately, readers won't mind. Much as Laurie Halse Anderson does in *Speak* (Farrar, 1999), the author grabs readers and takes them on a believable journey into a psyche beset with demons.

Cheri Dobbs,
Detroit Country Day Middle School, Beverly Hills, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 10-12. It's not hard to see why British novelist Bennett, whose work has never previously been published in the U.S., was moved to build a novel around Mary Shelley's scandalous life, beginning with Mary's seduction at 16 by married Romantic poet Percy Shelley, and concluding with her completion of *Frankenstein*. Though never graphic, the plot is both racy and dramatic, incorporating a subsequent, devastating affair between Percy Shelley and Mary's stepsister, suicides, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and the deaths of three of her four children. Many YAs will recognize the novel's themes of passion and disillusionment, although some readers' attention may flag as the impulsive teen "drowning in love" transforms into a melancholy, bereaved mother and driven writer. In the end, Bennett's insightful telling will probably be most appreciated by those fresh from classroom studies of *Frankenstein*. Have nonfiction resources ready, though, because the novel lacks an endnote to clear up lingering questions--e.g., Did Mary really make a memento of the dead Percy's half-charred heart, "snatched from his funeral pyre"? Jennifer Mattson

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which captures our attention & imagination right from the start! I couldn't put this book down and read it in 2 days. I truly enjoyed this work of fiction... It is more of a historical romance using historical figures from the past (mainly Mary & Percy Shelley) and interweaving fictionalized events/interactions between them. I was amazed at how much of the novel paralleled Mary & Percy Shelly's real life events..... This book is written from Mary Shelley's perspective and one truly feels as if one were reading Mary Shelly's personal memoirs, diaries, or letters on the events going in her life and how she may have felt about all that was going on in her life. Definitely an interesting read for sure & highly recommend.

Love this book! Perfect timing to be able to read before Halloween.

By Kinsey! I'd like to start by saying WOW, what a story. I stumbled upon this by chance at a 5-below store in my area for a dollar, and I thought, "Huh. A book about Mary Shelley? Why not?" It was all I hoped it would be and more. This is a historical fiction recounting of Mary Shelley's rather troubled young life. Historical fiction is not a genre I tend to gravitate towards, but Mary Shelley is one of the most famous and well-known horror writers ever, so I decided to give it a shot, and I was totally astounded. Mary is a rebellious sixteen year old girl, playing host to several fantasies with her stepsister: flirting with a nobleman or two, plotting marriages, and heck--perhaps even wooing the affections of a dashing young poet! Mary teaches Jane, her stepsister, all she knows about the art of flirtations. After all, the lessons and discomfort that courtship entails could one day pay off! And indeed it does when Mary happens to be in her father's shop one day when a very interesting man comes calling. Just as Mary imagined, it's a poet, Percy Shelley! Despite his other marital agreements, Shelley is quite taken with Mary, and whisks Mary and Jane away--to her father and stepmother's great displeasure--to Europe, where they live in secret happiness. The happiness, however, does not last, and *Angelmonster* becomes a chilling tale colored by Jane, Mary, and Shelley's distress. Readers follow the trio throughout Europe as they run from rumors, despair, and lost passion, and as they struggle to find trust, happiness, and a family together. On the trip, Mary learns of an alchemist whose fanciful belief in making life from death inspires the now-famous novel, *Frankenstein*. Something I quite like about this book is that, despite its romantic nature, the scenes are not at all graphic, descriptive, or steamy. The reader knows that romance is happening, but only because subtle hints are given, and then the author moves on. Also, *Angelmonster* is quite accurate in many of its facts about Mary's life. For instance, all the characters are based on real people; none were made up as composite, plot-filling people. The time frame is correct for the story, and it is obvious that the language is well researched, because it is well executed. A major inaccuracy featured in *Angelmonster* is the date that *Frankenstein* was penned. I won't say too much about this, for fear of giving too much away, but *Frankenstein* was in fact written in 1818, just a year after Mary and Shelley eloped.. Ms. Bennet admits in the author's note that she took creative license with *Frankenstein's* publication date--one of the benefits of writing historical fiction. This book is so gripping that I stayed up until one in the morning to finish it. The characters are researched and developed well, and the plot has you begging for more. It is a thoroughly great and unsettling read--not quite a horror novel, as I'd first expected, but it is worth every moment spent reading it.

I am just going to come out and say that I thought this novel was terrible. Not because it was written poorly or because it was unbelievable, but because it just made one feel depressed and dark

reading it. After reading the description, I was excited to read a fictional novel about how Mary and Percy Shelley came together, and how Mary received her inspiration for Frankenstein. From page one, however, it was hard to push through the pages. It wasn't until Percy came in around the second chapter that there was any real reason to be interested. At first, their relationship starts out romantic and ideal for any woman searching for love. However, the novel quickly turns sour after that. Everything turns so dark and negative, that reading the novel actually put me in a dark mood. Mary and Percy were constantly at odds, stuck with each other and pining for the love they once had, but not actually loving each other. They only seemed to care for each other like old friends who are stuck with each other. It was very depressing to read. Not to mention, the only straight forth explanation for Frankenstein's inspiration lasts only a couple of sentences. Of course, the entire novel explains how Mary came to write the novel, but one does not necessarily pick up on that until the end, which is probably the darkest part of the novel. No happy ending for Angelmonster. I will admit that it was a new and different take on the Shelley's life, for me anyway, and was interesting to read. As long as you do not expect any optimism or positivity.

This is a well done historical novel for young adults which focuses on the passionate but troubled real life of Mary Shelley. Bennett does not sugarcoat the suffering and social exile that resulted from Mary's love affair (and later, marriage) to Percy Shelley, the scandalous atheist, radical, and poet. We see, however, how Mary harnessed the many demons of her life to create a timeless masterpiece, the novel Frankenstein. Funny that in her lifetime she would be thought of as the wife of that scandalous poet, and now he is discussed as the husband of the brilliant author. This novel is perhaps best for middle to upper teens, as the subject matter is a bit mature and hard to understand for younger readers. At points, the writing is memorable in re-creating the wild passions and obsessions of Shelleys. portraying them as rebelling against the traditions and dogmas of their time but never quite managing to forge a workable moral code of their own. It is essentially about a beautiful but imperfect love affair, but is also a fascinating portrait of perhaps the first truly modern woman.

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