The myth of Frankenstein continued to resonate into the 20th century. Although many welcomed changes caused by scientific advances, some worried about society's ability to retain control of technologies that challenged their understanding of what it means to be human.

In her novel, Mary Shelley's monster turns to violence after he is abandoned. In the 1931 film, the monster is violent because he received the brain of a criminal. During the early 20th century, researchers looked for physical markers of criminality in the brain and other parts of the body.

Contemporary scientific advances raise difficult ethical and policy questions. Although the scientist Victor Frankenstein failed to take responsibility for his misbegotten monster, Mary Shelley has for two centuries offered the Promethean possibility that humanity could make responsible choices.

In Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus, novelist Mary Shelley used the scientific advances of her era and the controversies surrounding them as a metaphor for issues of unchecked power and self-serving ambition, and their effect on the human community.

More than a simple parable of science gone mad, Frankenstein uses scientific themes as a framework for exploring larger political issues of power, responsibility, and justice in society.
In 1816, Mary Godwin and her lover, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, summered in Switzerland. Together they visited with Lord Byron who was staying nearby. One night, Byron suggested that they take part in a competition to write a terrifying tale.

Mary Shelley's education stressed the development of the imagination; she was introduced to great works of literature, history, mythology, and studied French and Latin. Her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, were noted progressive thinkers and political theorists.

Mary Shelley, like many of her contemporaries, was fascinated by the boundary between the living and the dead and the scientific search for the principle of life. In her novel, the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein makes references to the power of electricity and his infusion of “a spark of being into the lifeless thing.”

Italian physician Giovanni Aldini administered electricity to the bodies of decapitated animals and humans and produced twitching and other physical movements. Audiences believed these movements signaled the potential of this radical new technology.

From its first appearance in 1818, Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein** both fascinated and repelled audiences. Her story, moreover, attracted other creative artists, who freely adapted the novel for audiences in England, America, and Europe.

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**Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein** began a process of simplifying and distorting Mary Shelley’s novel. In the play, many characters are eliminated and the monster becomes a speechless and remorseless killer.