

1818 Briefing

Welcome to *The Dare*. You will play the five Romantic writers who stayed at Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva in Switzerland in 1816--which resulted in the ground-breaking novel *Frankenstein*. 1816 came to be known as the Year Without a Summer. Young, intellectual and brave (or stupid) they sought to throw off the chains of polite society: questioning the sanctity of marriage and embracing what they called "free love", rebelling against aristocratic privilege and hierarchal society (while benefiting from the wealth and freedom it accorded many of them) and championing equality for women (while living lives that undermined the choice and freedom of many of the women in this very circle).

There were two versions of *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, published. The first in 1818, was published anonymously with an introduction by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Many wrongly thought Percy Shelley was the author. This was published at the height of their Romantic aspirations--after Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley had married Percy and become Mary Shelley, while Byron and Percy were alive and planning the publication of a magazine, *The Liberal*, to put forward socially liberal political ideals.

The second edition, with revisions by Mary Shelley was published in 1831, after the death of many of her children and her beloved husband Percy. *Frankenstein*, despite critical reservations, was an immediate popular success, adapted for the stage during Mary's lifetime and has been presented in film, novel and every form that media has to offer.

In playing this game, you will take on the roles of these writers and also play out pieces of the fiction--some of which was written during this summer, some of which was inspired at that time but came to pass later.

There are two version of the game. This, the 1818 version focuses on the many works that came into being that summer. Letting us experience the other works inspired on that cold, frightening summer in the shadow of war and on the cusp of our modern era.

Four of the artists wrote significant pieces: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin with *Frankenstein*, Lord Byron with *The Prisoner of Chillon*, John Polidori with *The Vampyre*, and Percy Shelley with *A Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.

What if each work became as famous as *Frankenstein*? If *The Vampyre* become the model for seductive vampires, and Lord Ruthven's name obscured *Dracula*? If the *Prisoner of Chillon* a fundamental statement on imprisonment and rebellion? If the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* was the foundation for a high appreciation for the pursuit of thought and knowledge?

Scene structure:

Whist Introductory Warm-up

The Dare – Byron challenges everyone to write a ghost story

Writing Scenes: each author gives a monologue about their inspiration, then directs two scenes – the scenes are played out by the other players, with no words.

Interludes: Claire chooses scenes about the authors' lives, uses Meta-techniques with GMs

Laudanum Scene: Claire chooses an author to give Laudanum, they dream and are joined by creatures of their works and the other authors

Epilogue: what could these works have inspired?

1831 Briefing

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In playing this game, you will take on the roles of these writers, play out scenes from *Frankenstein* and enter Mary's laudanum dream.

There are two versions of the game. This, the 1831 version focuses on the lives and relationships of the authors. By acting on their political principles (as well as baser urges) they made decisions this summer that irrevocably changed their lives. The creative collaboration laid the ground work for Mary to write *Frankenstein*, a work which was received to wide popular acclaim at the time, and which continues to have relevance in our world. The themes it addresses: life and birth, conquering death, love, alienation and companionship, technology and its ethical implications only become more important as time goes by.

First we'll have you work in small groups - the romantic couples and Polidori with the GMs, to choose what scenes will occur later in the game. Mary will consider which scenes from *Frankenstein* to enact. You'll provide background on the characters to each other through an introductory game of Whist. Then, we'll see the characters interact in Switzerland and we'll see the scenes of Mary Shelley's work intertwined with scenes from the lives of the authors. A Laudanum scene will mix the characters and their creations. We'll end with a brief Epilogue wrapping up each of their lives and legacies.

Scene structure:

Whist Introductory Warm-up

The Dare – Byron challenges everyone to write a ghost story

Writing Scenes: four scenes from *Frankenstein*, directed by Mary and the GMs

Interludes: John chooses scenes about the authors' lives, uses Meta-techniques with GMs

Laudanum Scene: Mary drinks Laudanum. She dreams of characters and friends

Epilogue: how each of their lives comes to an end