Young Frankenstein

A musical comedy by Mel Brooks (music/lyrics/book) and Thomas Meehan (book) based on the 20th Century Fox film by Gene Wilder and Mel Brooks (story/screenplay)

19th – 30th April 2022

The Deutsches Theater München presents a production by The English Theatre Frankfurt

Teachers' Resource Pack

This teachers' resource pack includes factual information as well as tasks and topics to be dealt with in the classroom. Cut and paste as you please, and please consult the official program for additional information.

The authors

Mel Brooks

Brooks (born June 28, 1926) was born as Melvin Kaminsky into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York.
After graduating from Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, Brooks spent a year learning psychology at Brooklyn College before being drafted by the army. In the army, Brooks was stationed in North Africa as an engineer during World War II. Following the war, Brooks began his career as a stand-up comic and then as a comedy writer for television. Some of his most recognized television works include the *2000 Year Old Man*, the series *Get Smart*, and the Robin Hood parody *When Things Were Rotten*.
It was not until later in his career that Mel Brooks moved into cinema as an actor, director, writer and producer. A few of his most acclaimed films have been *Young Frankenstein* and *Blazing Saddles*, both of which were released in 1974. Brooks is notorious for appearing in nearly all of his films. His films usually contain many Jewish references and jokes. His movies are also recognized as containing a mocking song-and-dance number.
In 1980, Mel Brooks launched the production company Brooksfilm, to produce the film "The Elephant Man," a more dramatic picture directed by David Lynch.
In 2001, Mel Brooks returned to Broadway with his stage performance of his 1968 film *The Producers*. While the movie won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay in 1968; the Broadway show adaptation earned Brooks the Tony Award for Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, and Best Original Score.
In 2021 he celebrated his 95th birthday.
https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/mel-brooks
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mel_Brooks

Thomas Meehan

The 3 times Tony award Winner Thomas Meehan is known for his musicals Hairspray, Annie, and nine other Broadway productions. He was born in New York in 1929 and worked as journalist, writer and comedian. As a good friend and colleague of Mel Brooks he wrote and co-wrote a lot of his projects, like the musical Young Frankenstein. The original four-page long script of Young Frankenstein was created by Gene Wilder who adapted the film "son of Frankenstein" from 1939. Afterwards, Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan made a deep study of all Frankenstein films and worked on the humorous script, that became a large success. Meehan died in 2017.

The director – Derek Anderson

Derek studied Film and Television Production at the North East College of Scotland followed by Theatre Production from Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. On his directing debut, Derek won the 2015 Whatsonstage Award for Best Off-West End Production for Stephen Sondheim's **Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street** at the Twickenham Theatre. The critically acclaimed production, starring Olivier Award-winner David Bedella in the title role, was also nominated for Best Musical Revival. For Aberdeen Arts Centre Derek directed the Kander and Ebb musical **Cabaret**, Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's **Company** and **The Pillowman** by Martin McDonagh. At The English Theatre Frankfurt Derek has directed **Hand to God**, **The Lion in Winter** and **One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest.**

Other work includes **Into the Woods** by Stephen Sondheim for Stowe Arts and the world premier of **Eyes Closed, Ears Covered** by Alex Gwyther at the Bunker Theatre which was nominated for three Off-West End Awards. Recently Derek directed **Ticker** by Tom Machell, a new play currently running at the Edinburgh Festival.

https://www.english-theatre.de/london-team/

Young Frankenstein

Synopsis

While teaching his students about the glories of the brain in New York, Dr. Frederick Frankenstein learns that he has inherited his family's estate in Transylvania. He sails to Europe and is seen off by his adorable if slightly frigid madcap society fiancée, Elizabeth. Arriving by train in Transylvania, Frederick is met at the train station by his new servant Igor and the voluptuous Inga, who Igor hired to be Frederick´s lab assistant. They travel by horse-drawn cart to Castle Frankenstein where they encounter the cryptic and mysterious housekeeper, Frau Blucher.

Later, Inga and Frederick discover the secret entrance to Victor Frankenstein's legendary laboratory. Frau Blucher is waiting for them there and confesses her relationship with the late doctor. Upon reading his grandfather's private journals Frederick is inspired to resume his grandfather's experiments in re-animating the dead. He and Igor exhume the enormous corpse of a recently executed criminal while the village´s inspector Kemp and the villagers meet and decide to monitor the Doctor's activities.

Igor is sent to steal the brain of a revered scientist but the plans go awry. He grabs a different brain instead. At the castle, Frederick brings the creature to life during a violent thunder-and-lightning storm. Kemp and the villagers pay a visit to the castle to get a first impression of what might be going on.

Frederick assures them that all is quiet in the castle, but the creature's cries from inside arouse fear and suspicion. In an attempt to camouflage the noise, Igor, Inga and Frederick improvise an eccentric new song and dance. Everyone joins in until the monstrous creature, set free by Frau Blucher, bursts into the room. The monster tosses Frederick to the ground and Act One ends with his escape into the woods.

Act Two begins with everyone in pursuit of the escaped monster. Back at the castle Inga encourages Frederick to forget the brain and give in to his romantic desires. While they are

consummating their relationship, Elizabeth arrives for an unexpected visit and enters the laboratory where she finds Frederick and Inga.
The scene shifts to a cottage in the forest where a blind hermit yearns for some companionship. The monster crashes in and is offered food and drink by the lonely hermit. When the hermit attempts to light the monster's cigar, he mistakenly ignites the monster's thumb and the angry creature violently departs, leaving the hermit once again alone.
As a result of his departure, the monster is captured and Frederick wins him over with flattery and visions of his potential. After a period of training, Frederick presents the creature at a theatre in Transylvania. The show is a sensation but ends disastrously when a stage light catches fire and the frightened monster becomes violent. He kidnaps Elizabeth.
In a cave in the forest the monster and Elizabeth get very close. She falls in love with him due to his superhuman strength and the enormity of his physique.
The monster finally leaves Elizabeth in the cave because he feels drawn to some mysterious music. Frederick subdues the monster and brings him back to the castle not knowing that Elizabeth is alive and very close by. He electronically transfers a copy of his own genius-level intelligence into the brain of the monster hoping that the monster then can tell him Elizabeth´s whereabouts as Kemp and the villagers storm the laboratory. Kemp arrests both Frederick and the creature. But the newly eloquent and sophisticated monster is able to reason with Kemp and the villagers supported by Elizabeth who followed the monster back to the castle. He and a transformed Elizabeth reveal plans to marry. All ends happily when Inga joyfully learns what her new husband to be, Frederick, got in return from the monster as a result of the transference procedure.

The Characters

Dr. Frederick Frankenstein
Frederick is the grandson of the famous Victor Frankenstein and very unhappy with his descendancy at the beginning. After inheriting the Transylvanian castle, he travels there and learns that his grandfather has indeed been successful in resurrecting a corpse which changes his whole attitude towards his heritage. Trying to complete his grandfather´s work, he himself resurrects a dead body and faces the consequences afterwards. Being engaged to Elizabeth at the beginning of the play, his interest is drawn to Inga, his assistant, while he is in Transylvania.

Elizabeth
Elizabeth is Frederick´s fiancée. She is an American socialite. At the beginning she is very superficial and cold towards Frederick. When she follows her fiancé to Transylvania, she gets abducted by the monster and falls in love with him.

Igor
Igor is a hunchbacked servant at castle Frankenstein whose grandfather has worked for Fredericks´s grandfather Victor. Igor encourages Frederick to stay and to take up his grandfather´s work. He plays an important role in creating the monster.

Inga
Inga is Frederick´s lab assistant – hired by Igor – and Frederick´s love interest.

Frau Blücher
Frau Blücher is the housekeeper at the castle. She used to be Victor Frankenstein´s girlfriend and treats the monster very affectionately like her own child.

The monster
The monster created by Frederick Frankenstein was supposed to receive the brain of a "scientist and saint", but due to a mistake it gets an abnormal brain. In consequence, the monster can barely speak and moves funnily. Moreover, he shows aggressive behaviour. Instead of killing the monster, Frederick shows him love and affection and socializes the monster. When presented to the public however, the monster becomes frightened by an exploding stage light, runs off again and takes Frederick´s fiancé with him. Elizbeth and the monster start a physical relationship and fall in love. Again, Frederick finds the monster and takes him home in order to transfer his own cognitive abilities to the monster, who in return can afterwards safe Frederick from the raging villagers with Elizabeth´s help.

Inspector Kemp
Kemp is the village´s police officer. He leads the villagers and later incites them to hunt the monster and hang Frankenstein.

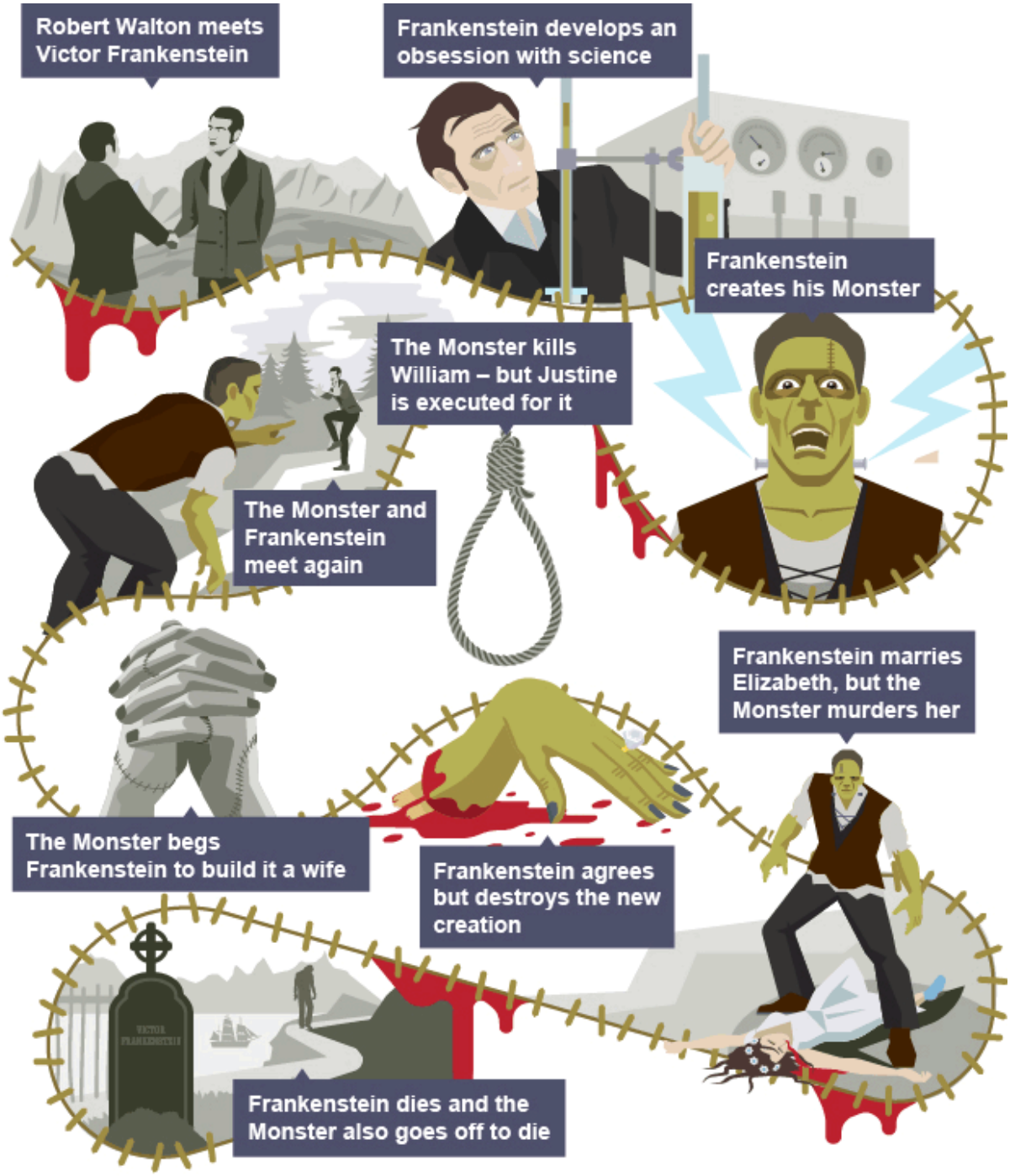
The blind hermit
The hermit is desperately looking for companionship and immediately takes in the monster when they meet. The hermit tries to be hospitable in serving soup and wine and espresso but mostly hurts the monster in his attempts and finally scares it away when trying to light a cigar but accidentally burning the monster´s fingers. At the end of the play, the hermit finds in Frau Blücher the companion he was looking for.

The Original – Mary Shelley´s Frankenstein

Mary Shelley

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, née **Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin**, (born August 30, 1797, London, England—died February 1, 1851, London), English Romantic novelist best known as the author of *Frankenstein*.
Mary Shelley is an English novelist whose work has reached all corners of the globe. Author of *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), Shelley was the daughter of the radical philosopher William Godwin, who described her as 'singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind'. Her mother, who died days after her birth, was the famous defender of women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary grew up with five semi-related siblings in Godwin's unconventional but intellectually electric household.
At the age of 16, Mary eloped to Italy with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who praised 'the irresistible wildness & sublimity of her feelings'. Each encouraged the other's writing, and they married in 1816 after the suicide of Shelley's wife. They had several children, of whom only one survived.
In May 1816, the Shelleys were in Switzerland with Jane Clairmont, Lord Byron and John Polidori. The group entertained themselves one rainy day by reading a book of ghost stories. Lord Byron suggested that they all should try their hand at writing their own horror story. It was at this time that Mary Shelley began work on what would become her most famous novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. Superficially a Gothic novel, influenced by the experiments of Luigi Galvani it is also a philosophical novel and often considered an early example of science fiction.
After Percy Shelley's death in 1822, she returned to London and pursued a very successful writing career as a novelist, biographer and travel writer. She also edited and promoted her husband's poems and other writings.
https://www.bl.uk/people/mary-shelley
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Wollstonecraft-Shelley#ref163626
https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/themen/mary-shelleys-roman-ueber-eine-pandemie-17211298/sie-wollte-nicht-immer-nur-17212107.html

Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus - a very brief summary



Robert Walton, an explorer, tells how he has met Victor Frankenstein in the Arctic after earlier having seen a 'gigantic figure' crossing the ice.

Victor tells of his childhood and his caring family, particularly of his love for his foster sister Elizabeth. His mother dies of fever just before he leaves to study at university.

While at university, Victor's interest in science becomes an obsession. Victor uses dead bodies to experiment on and creates a monster made of body parts. He is immediately disgusted by the thing he has created and abandons it.

Victor's brother William is murdered and Justine Moritz, a family servant, is executed for it. However, Victor believes the Monster is to blame after witnessing it at the scene of the murder.

The Monster and Victor meet on the Glacier of Montanvert in the Alps. The Monster tells the story of how it has survived and of the time it has spent becoming educated.

The Monster asks Victor to admit responsibility for his actions and show some sympathy. He also pleads with Victor to build a female companion. Victor agrees.

Victor finds a remote spot in the Orkneys where he begins to construct the female creature but suddenly, realising the consequences of what he is doing, he tears it to pieces. The Monster, who has followed Victor, is enraged and in revenge kills Victor's best friend, Henry Clerval.

Victor and Elizabeth marry, but Victor finds his new wife dead at the hands of the Monster. He vows to hunt the creature down.

In Walton's last letters, back in the Arctic, Frankenstein dies and the Monster, still miserable, heads off, probably to its own death.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8w7mp3/revision/2

Parody

Parodies are a type of the comedy genre. A parody is an imitation of a writer, artist, subject, or genre in such a way as to make fun of or comment on the original work. Parodies are often exaggerated in the way they imitate the original in order to produce a humorous effect. While parodies are generally intended to amuse, they are not always comedic in nature and sometimes take on fairly serious subject matters. Parody, whether in literature, art, music, or other forms, find something to ridicule within the original, whether lightly or harshly. Aristotle identified the ancient Greek writer Hegemon of Thasos, who lived around 400 BC, as the father of parody. Hegemon was the first to take well-known poems of his day and alter the wordings slightly so that the sublime became ridiculous. Indeed, the word and definition of parody come from the Greek word *parodia*, which was a narrative poem that imitated the style of the ancient Greek epic poems, but dealt with mock-heroic or light subjects.

The Difference between Parody and Satire

There is a great deal in common with parody and satire, as they are both used to comment on and/or ridicule something in a culture that already exists. Satire, however, is broader in that in can deal with a wider range of problems in society and has at its disposal many different literary devices with which to ridicule those problems, such as double entendre and sarcasm. Parody treats with one author, style, or genre in which it subtly uses and then distorts or subverts the conventions of the original. An audience must understand the original off which a parody is written to fully "get the joke." Still, many satires make use of parody to produce their witty or biting effect.

The famous novelist Vladimir Nabokov described the difference between the two concepts thus, "Satire is a lesson, parody is a game."

Common Examples of Parody

There are many examples of parody in music, movies, television, and video games. Here are some famous examples:

- Charlie Chaplin impersonated Hitler in the film *The Great Dictator*.
- The British group Monty Python parodied the tradition of King Arthur stories in their movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and Bible based stories in their movie *Life of Brian.*
- The *Scary Movie* movies parodied the *Scream* series and the horror genre in general.

Significance of Parody in Literature

Parody has been popular in literature for thousands of years. Authors use parody for many reasons, including to comment on styles they find ridiculous or overly stale. At times, however, parody is in fact a form of homage to a greater writer. Some obscure or beginning writers may try to take on the style of a famous author both to get a little more attention or even practice in the art of writing. Thus, they may use the conventions of a famous writer not in order to criticize or mock, but simply in recognition that these conventions exist. Some authors also use parody just to make their readers laugh.
https://literarydevices.com/parody/

Pre-Watching Activities

Shelley´s Frankenstein – Getting to know the original story

Mary Shelley´s *Frankenstein; or, the modern Prometheus* is a very famous novel from 1816. It dealt with topics like birth and creation, (dangerous) pursuit of knowledge and a God-complex with all its consequences. It also addresses fundamental sociological questions like the importance of nature and nurture in human lives.

1 Have a look at the comic below and think of a story line. Take notes on an extra sheet of paper on what you think is happening.
2 Get together with a partner. Discuss your ideas on the plot.
3 On a next page, you will get a very brief summary of Mary Shelley´s *Frankenstein; or, the modern Prometheus*. Read the summary and find the right headings for each picture. The headings are given underneath the summary.

Synopsis Mary Shelley´s Frankenstein

Robert Walton, an explorer, tells how he has met Victor Frankenstein in the Arctic after earlier having seen a 'gigantic figure' crossing the ice.

Victor tells of his childhood and his caring family, particularly of his love for his foster sister Elizabeth. His mother dies of fever just before he leaves to study at a university.

While at university, Victor's interest in science becomes an obsession. Victor uses dead bodies to experiment on and creates a monster made of body parts. He is immediately disgusted by the thing he has created and abandons it.

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8w7mp3/revision/2

Headings for the Comic

A Frankenstein marries Elizabeth, but the monster murders her.

B The monster and Frankenstein meet again

D Frankenstein agrees but destroys the new creation

C Robert Walton meets Frankenstein

E Frankenstein dies and the monster also goes off to die

F The monster begs Frankenstein to build it a wife

G Frankenstein develops an obsession with science

I The monster kills William – but Justine is executed for it

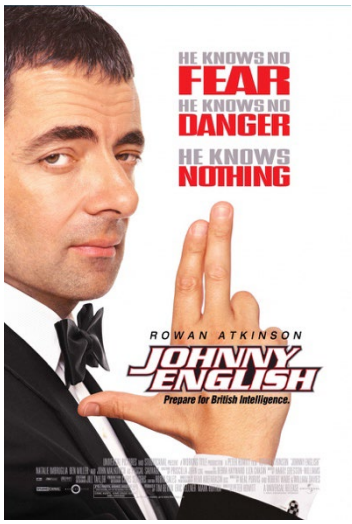
H Frankenstein creates his monster

Characteristics of Parodies - Getting to know the Genre

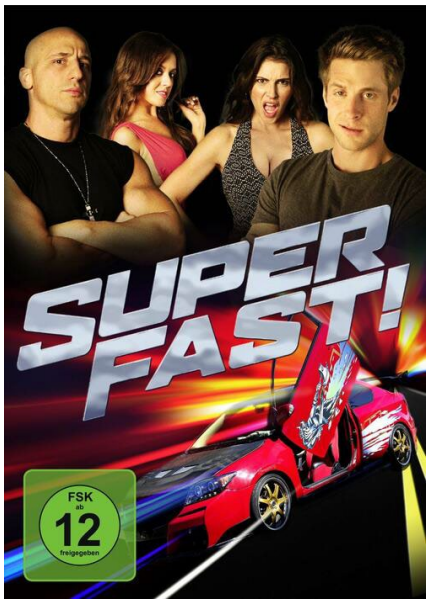
1 Choose 2 of the following trailers.

dailymotion.com/video/x7wzlg7 (Scary Movie)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJwUFq8uOr0 (Enchanted)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSg2tgnvtgY (Johnny English)



https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7x20kc (Superfast!)

2 Watch the first video together in class and discuss what the movie seems to be about.
3 Watch the second video in class and discuss what the movie might be about.
4 Share whether these movies appeal to you or not and why.
5 Watch both videos again.

Think: What do they have in common? What do they make fun of? Take notes.
Pair: Talk to your partner about the similarities.
Share: Make a list in class.[1]

[1] Possible answers: They are supposed to be laughed at, they make fun of another movie, the originals are not (only) meant to be funny, both are parodies/spoofs… (spoofs make fun of a genre, parodies make fun of one specific work.)

After finishing the first draft of a list, the teacher may introduce the term "parody".
6 Read the characteristics of Parody and complete your list.

Characteristics of Parodies

A parody is a work that mimics the style of another work, artist, or genre in an exaggerated way, usually for comic effect. Parodies can take many forms, including fiction, poetry, film, visual art, and more. For instance, *Scary Movie* and its many sequels are films that *parody* the conventions of the horror film genre.

Some additional key details about parodies:

- It probably doesn't make sense to call something a parody unless you can say *what* it parodies. All parodies are "mimetic" or "imitative," meaning they must use an already existing genre, artist, work of literature, or artwork as their source material.
- Parodies don't necessarily have to criticize the thing they parody. Sometimes, parodies provide a more neutral illumination of, or comment upon, the original work without necessarily mocking it.
- A parody does not always need to refer to the entire work it's parodying, but can instead pick and choose aspects of it to satirize, exaggerate, disparage, or mock.
- Sometimes the term parody is confused with that of satire, which is also a humorous art form. Vladimir Nabokov, a well-known writer, once put it in a nutshell: Satire is a lesson, Parody is a game.

https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/parody

Working with the text – comparing the parody to the original

7 Read the excerpt from Mary Shelley´s Frankenstein.
8 Underline key passages and find headings to the paragraphs
9 Talk to your partner about the plot. Discuss questions you might have.
10 Answer the questions below the text.

Excerpt Mary Shelley´s Frankenstein – Chapter 15

After being created and left alone by Victor Frankenstein, the monster wanders off into the world. On his travels, not being able to read, write or even speak, he comes across a family, who lives in a small cottage. He studies this family, their love for each other and their struggles from afar and grows attached to them. He even learns their language just by listening to their conversations. One day, when only the old, blind father is at home, he dares to knock at the door.

[…] My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would decide my hopes or realize my fears. […] it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me and I sank to the ground. Again, I rose […]. The fresh air revived me, and with renewed determination I approached the door of their cottage.
I knocked. 'Who is there?' said the old man. 'Come in.' I entered.
'Pardon this intrusion,' said I; 'I am a traveler in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.'
´Enter,' said De Lacey, 'and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'
'Do not trouble yourself, my kind host; I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.'
I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the interview, when the old man addressed me. 'By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; are you French?'
'No; but I was educated by a French family and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes. […] I am an unfortunate and deserted creature, I look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world forever.'
'Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.'
'They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, […] a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.'
'That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?'
'I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; […] but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.'
[…]'If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is

something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.'
'Excellent man! I thank you and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures.'
'Heaven forbid! […] I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent; judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.
[…] May I know the names and residence of those friends?'
I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob me of or bestow happiness on me forever. […] I sank on the chair and sobbed aloud. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose, but seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the time! Save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'
'Great God!' exclaimed the old man. 'Who are you?'
At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? […] Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel.
Shelley, Mary: Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus. Wordsworth Classics (1999), p. 98-104.

A Describe the monster´s situation in 3 – 5 sentences.
B Who are these friends the monster is talking about?
C What does he hope, the old man could do?
D Why is the old man not prejudiced against the monster?
E Give reasons why the monster had to leave in the end.
F Imagine, the monster had not left the cottage. What do you think would have happened?

Excerpt Mel Brooks´ Young Frankenstein

In the musical´s plot you can find many parallels to Mary Shelley´s novel. The monster for example, after being created by Victor Frankenstein´s grandson, also wanders off and finds a blind and lonely hermit.

11Read the excerpt and highlight key passages. Find headings.
12 Talk to your partner about the plot. Discuss possible questions you might have.

ACT TWO
Scene 3

HERMIT

HERMIT
Oh, Lord, please take pity! I'm blind and oh so lonely!
[…]
Oh, lordy, I'm prayin' to ya, Look down on your poor blind hermit. It's been so long since felt the touch of someone's hand, so long since heard the sound of someone´s voice. Every night, all I hear is the wind in the trees and if I´m lucky, an owl or maybe… a cricket. Oh, lord, let´s face it, we´re talkin´ LONELY here.

The MONSTER crashes through the wall.

THANK YOU!

The HERMIT speaks to the MONSTER, who constantly makes a variety and groaning sounds throughout this scene.

Hello, stranger. My name is Harold, what´s your name?

The MONSTER grunts.

I'm sorry, I didn't get that.

The MONSTER grunts again.

Oh, forgive me, I didn't realize that you were a mute.

Running his hands over the MONSTER.

An incredibly large mute. But come, come in out of the cold.

HE gestures to the MONSTER to follow him.

You must be hungry. Come to the table.

HE indicates a rustic kitchen table at which there is a single chair. crosses, but first hits his head on a rack of pans.

Watch out for the frying pan.

HE pulls out the chair.

Here, friend, make yourself comfortable... sit here...

The MONSTER sits just as the HERMIT pulls the chair out from under him and places it on the other side of the table; HE speaks as the MONSTER crashes butt-first to the floor and gives out another loud groan of pain.

HE crosses to a steaming iron pot of soup sitting on a stove.
[…]

How does a nice hot bowl of chicken-noodle soup sound to you?

MONSTER, getting up from the floor and cautiously sitting at the table, groans again.
[…]
HE places a soup bowl on the table by the MONSTER and then carries the pot of soup over to the table and prepares to ladle the soup into the bowl.

Here we go. Nice hot boiling soup. Hold out your bowl.

MONSTER picks up his bowl and holds it out toward the ladle-full of soup being served to him by the HERMIT; the HERMIT, however, ladles the soup directly into the MONSTER's lap. The MONSTER gives out an agonized cry of excruciating pain.

Oh, I love a scream of delight! More?

The MONSTER groans.

Here you go!

Although the MONSTER desperately tries to hold his bowl under the ladle in order not to have another helping of boiling soup poured in his crotch, HE doesn't succeed and is once again scalded with soup; HE gives out yet another scream of pain.

You really like it! And now, I know, let's celebrate!

HE opens a bottle of wine.

I've been saving a special bottle of wine for just such a joyous occasion. a Gewurtz Tramine Schwartzen Keller Spatlese 1905. Here, let me pour you some.

The MONSTER picks up a wine tankard, holds it out, and as the HERMIT pours. […]
HE pours his own wine into a tankard.

First we have to toast to our wonderful new friendship! To us!

HE brings his tankard against the MONSTER's instantly shattering it and leaving the MONSTER holding only the handle; the HERMIT drinks his wine.

[…]
Now, I know, an after-dinner surprise.

HE holds up two cigars.

Cigars! There you go!

HE hands a cigar to the MONSTER and turns to the stovetop to retrieve a lit candle. The HERIMIT returns and, seeing the lighted candle, the MONSTER moans in fear.

No, no, don't be afraid. Fire is good. Fire is very good. Fire is our friend. Here, let me show you.

HE lights his own cigar with the candle

You see. […] Here, let me light it for you.

HE takes the hand of the MONSTER that is holding the cigar and lifts up the MONSTER's thumb, which HE mistakes for the cigar.

Hold it out, just like that. Now don't inhale till the tip glows.

HE holds the flame of the candle to the MONSTER's thumb, setting it on fire. The MONSTER screams in pain, leaps up and crashes through the cottage door, lurching off into the night.

Brooks, Mel: The New Mel Brooks Musical: Young Frankenstein. Seattle, 2007. Director: Dereck Anderson, Frankfurt am Main 2021.

13 Compare both scenes from the novel and from the play. Think about similarities as well as differences.

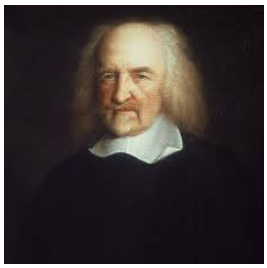
14 Explain on the foundation of these two scenes why the musical *Young Frankenstein* is a parody.

15 Get into groups and play the scene. Play it as funny as possible.

While-Watching Activities

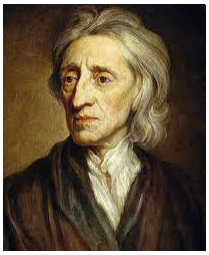
Crash Curse Nature vs. Nurture Debate

Philosophers and scientists alike have debated for centuries whether a person's character is the result of nature or nurture; of genes or of upbringing and socialization. While Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) was a famous spokesperson for the nature-view, John Locke (1632 – 1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) represented the nurture-idea.



Thomas Hobbes

The Nature-View: Also known as nativism, supporters of this view believe that certain skills, abilities and dispositions are hard-wired into the brain at birth. Supporters believe that heredity plays the biggest role in what we are, and aspects of our personalities like intelligence, morals, and likes and dislikes are within us before we leave the womb.



John Locke

The Nurture-View: Also known as *tabula rasa* ("blank slate"), supporters of this view that humans acquire almost all behavioral traits from their environments and the other people in those environments. They believe that people are born without built-in mental content, and knowledge comes from experience and perception; social and emotional behavior and knowledge are influenced by others.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

In Mary Shelley´s *Frankenstein* as well as in the Musical Young Frankenstein we can find traces of this debate.

1 Read the following excerpt.[2]
2 Underline passages that are connected to the nature vs. nurture debate and take explaining notes.
3 Write down notes on whether you think the monster is responsible for his actions and why.
4 Discuss your ideas in class.

https://www.geschichte-abitur.de/staatstheorien-der-aufklaerung/john-locke-liberalismus
https://www.br.de/mediathek/podcast/radiowissen/der-philosoph-thomas-hobbes-der-mensch-ist-dem-menschen-ein-wolf/1836593
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau

[2] The excerpt dealing with the DeLacey family and the monster´s attempt to be accepted by them could be used alternatively.

Excerpt Mary Shelley´s Frankenstein – Chapter 10

After he had killed several people, the monster confronts Victor. He tries to convince his creator to listen to his story.

.

Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough that you seek to increase my misery? […] But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. […]

'How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me. […] Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. […] Let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale: when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. […] Yet I ask you not to spare me: listen to me; and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands.'

'Why do you call to my remembrance,' I rejoined 'circumstances, Of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! […]

Shelley, Mary: Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus. Wordsworth Classics (1999), p. 77-79.

5 *Young Frankenstein* again takes up the nature vs nurture debate. While watching the play, pay attention to the monster´s inclusion in society, to Frederick´s behavior towards his monster as well as to the monster´s development.

6 Discuss your insights in class.

Young Frankenstein Quiz

1 At the beginning of the musical, how does Frederick feel about his ancestor Viktor Frankenstein?

A He is proud and wants to take over the family tradition which is why he travels to his grandfather´s estate.
B He does not know that he is related to the famous Viktor Frankenstein until he inherits his grandfather´s castle
C He wants nothing to do with his grandfather and thinks Victor Frankenstein was delusional.

2 Who is Elizabeth?

A Frederick´s assistant
B Frederick´s fiancé
C Igor´s wife

3 Where is Victor Frankenstein´s castle?

A Bavaria
B France
C Transylvania

4 When meeting Frau Blucher and Igor, Frederick presents them with a challenge, in order to distance himself from his grandfather. What does he want?

A He wants to be called Fronkensteen instead of Frankenstein.
B He wants to rename the castle.
C He wants to sell the castle.

5 In which way does Igor know the Frankenstein family?

A He used to work for Frederick´s grandfather too.
B He is Frederick´s cousin.
C His grandfather used to work for Frederick´s grandfather.

6 Why did Igor hire Inga? Choose the explanation that fits best.

A He wants her to seduce Frederick, so he would want to stay.
B Inga is supposed to be Frederick´s assistant for his “wacky work”.
C Igor loves Inga.

7 Who smokes cigars and plays the violin?

A The lab assistant Inga
B The butler Igor
C The housekeeper Frau Blucher

8 When Frederick learns the truth, he is convinced that he can iron out his grandfather´s mistakes when bringing someone back to live. Which body part plays the main role?

A A heart
B A brain
C The legs

9 Upon being asked whose brain was obtained, Igor confesses that the brain he supplies belonged to whom?

A Abby Normal (abnormal)
B Hans Delbrück
C A Blind Hermit

10 How does Frederick try to convince the villagers of his monster´s innocence?

A The monster gives a reading of Grimm´s fairytales.
B Every-one of them is allowed to stroke the monster´s hair
C He and the monster sing and tab dance.

11 After being abducted, Elizabeth starts to show interest in the monster. Why?

A She is physically attracted to the monster.
B She can talk all the time because he is mute.
C He saved her from Frederick´s madness.

12 When the monster leaves Elizabeth, he is lured back to the castle by Frederick. How?

A With his favorite food
B With music
C With Elisabeth´s perfume.

13 Frederick believes that the monster is dangerous and decides to take matters into his own hands. What does he do after he lured the monster back to the castle?

A He kills the monster before the villagers get hurt.
B He creates a female monster to keep his first creation company while being locked away.
C He transfers his own intellect into the monster´s brain.

14 At the end of the play, one of the characters stays single. Pick the correct character.

A The monster
B Frau Blucher
C Igor

Post-Watching Activities

A good laugh is a mighty good thing, and rather too scarce a good thing. — Herman Melville

Parodies are less common today in our media landscape than they were in the 1990s for example. In pandemic and insecure times, we desperately need a revival of this art form. Refer to *Young Frankenstein*. **Write a commentary.**

OR

Write a review on the musical *Young Frankenstein* written by Mel Brooks and directed by Derek Anderson for your school paper. You may also send it to education@english-theatre.de We would love to hear what you think!

How to write a commentary

- Make a pros and cons list (The statement is true/ the statement is not true)
- Decide for a position (being undecided is also valid)
- Structure your essay in Introduction, body, and conclusion

The Introduction
- Give general information on the topic (explain the word parody means, name popular parodies, refer to the pandemic)
- Briefly state your position.

The Body
- Explain your position in using arguments, examples, and consequences.
- Structure your body from least effective argument to most effective argument

The conclusion
- Briefly sum up your most valid arguments and give your opinion.

How to write a review

<u>General tips</u>

- Use present tense
- Structure your review in introduction – body – conclusion
- Give an opinion
- Present alternative ideas or recommendations

<u>The structure</u>

- Introduction:
    - Title, author(s), artform
    - Origin
    - Short summary
- Body:
    - Your opinions on the Musical
        - Set
        - Actors
        - Light and Sound
        - …
- Main aspects of your criticism and praise
- Recommendations and/or alternative ideas

Answers to the quiz *Young Frankenstein*

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10-14 correct answers	13-5 correct answers	4-0 correct answers
☺☺ Congratulations! You understood a lot!	☺ Quite good already! Talk to your classmates again about the play, you might tap into new levels of understanding!	😐 Don´t give up! Talk to your classmates about the parts of the play that are still a bit fuzzy to you.