

The background of the cover is a photograph of a snowy night scene. A house is visible in the distance, partially obscured by snow-covered trees. The sky is dark with a bright, glowing light source, possibly the moon or a star, creating a lens flare effect. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, purples, and whites, with a soft, ethereal glow.

**Informational Text Pack
for October**

A Hollywood Monster

and

Strange Weather

by Margaret Whisnant

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A HOLLYWOOD MONSTER STORY

by Margaret Whisnant

Would you recognize this face in a crowd? 

Well, of course, you would! He's one of the most popular Halloween monsters ever. Each October 31, thousands of his miniature duplicates ring doorbells and demand candy, or else.

He's also a Hollywood legend, but he isn't your typical leading man. He started out looking almost normal and had to ugly-up to be a movie star. Then there's the odd situation with his name.



Actor Boris Korloff—from
Universal Studios' 1931 *Frankenstein*

If you looked at his glamor shot and said, "That's Frankenstein!" you are technically incorrect. The teenage girl who dreamed him up and wrote a book about him almost 200 years ago didn't give him a name. Victor Frankenstein, her fictional mad scientist with nothing better to do than collect old body parts and reassemble them, called him all sorts of things, but never by a name. He still doesn't have one to this day, but that hasn't been a problem.

Frankenstein's monster has clomped and grunted his way through more than sixty movies, numerous TV shows, cartoons, countless stage productions, and decades of Halloweens. He got his start in a writing contest.

During the summer of 1816, 18-year-old Mary Shelley went with her husband Percy Shelley and two other people to visit Lord Byron at his villa in Geneva, Switzerland. Both Percy Shelley and Lord Byron were famous English poets. Mary was an English teenager with no writing experience.

A number of circumstances came together that summer to set the stage for the birth of our monster. To begin with, the weather was unusually cold and dreary, forcing Mary and her friends to stay indoors. In the outside world, scientists were making strides in anatomy, chemistry, and engineering, but there were still a few people looking for a magic "elixir of life" that would make it possible to live practically forever. The industrial revolution had brought an array of new machines and experiments with electricity. As a matter of fact, someone had just discovered that a zap of voltage could make disembodied frog muscles twitch. It was a time of real science and progress with some left-over weirdness woven in.

Full text is three pages.

A HOLLYWOOD MONSTER STORY

Questions

Refer to the text to answer the following questions. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

_____ 1. Which of the following is a *minor* detail the author included in the story of Frankenstein’s monster?

- (A) In Mary Shelley’s book, the monster had an almost normal, humanlike appearance, but he got ugly and scary for his movie roles.
- (B) The monster has never had a name.
- (C) He is a popular Halloween character as well as a movie star.
- (D) The monster’s TV wife looked very much like his movie bride.

_____ 2. Answer the following questions about Mary Shelley:

What was her nationality? _____

How old was she when she wrote her famous monster story? _____

Where and when did she write the book? _____

3. Supply the missing *effect* for each of the following *causes*.

Cause: In the summer of 1816, the cold, dreary weather kept Mary Shelly and her companions indoors telling ghost stories to each other.

Effect: _____

Cause: When Mary’s book was adapted for the stage, audiences couldn’t see into Frankenstein’s mind to understand his loathing for the creature he had created.

Effect: _____

Fifteen questions in complete product.

The Year Without a Summer

by Margaret Whisnant

No matter where your ancestors lived in 1816, they knew something wasn't quite right with the weather. Things were strange all over, but conditions in China, Ireland, England, Western Europe, and North America were extreme.

It was the year that summer disappeared. The sky was persistently overcast, and a reddish "dry fog" hung in the air, refusing to be blown or washed away by wind or rain. Instead of sunshine and warmth, the days brought floods, bitter winds, and storms that had people shoveling snow in June. New Englanders called it "Eighteen-Hundred-and-Froze-to-Death." It has gone down in history as the Year Without a Summer.

Weird Weather

When spring rolled into the Northeastern U.S. and Southeastern Canada in 1816, temperatures began to rise on schedule. Vegetable gardens sprouted, and fruit trees bloomed; but when the calendar flipped over to May, spring seemed to shift into reverse. Heavy frosts damaged crops as far south as Virginia and Pennsylvania. A rare snow threw a white blanket over the Quebec Province of Canada. New England woke up to freezing temperatures almost every day that May.



Farmers breathed a sigh of relief when June started out warm, only to be bewildered on the 7th and 8th by a violent storm that dumped a foot of snow across New England and parts of New York and Connecticut. A parade of frosty mornings followed, blackening trees, fields, and home gardens. Several weeks later a warm trend encouraged people to replant and wait for the July sun. Instead, they got a cold front that destroyed their new vegetable gardens and took 90% of their year's food supply. As if playing a cruel joke, temperatures were back to normal by the end of the month, only to fall disastrously within days.

Three pages in full text.

The Year Without a Summer

Questions

Use the text to answer the following questions. Write your responses in the blanks provided.

- _____ 1. Which quote from the article *best* expresses its main idea?
 - (A) The title: *The Year Without a Summer*
 - (B) *No matter where your ancestors lived in 1816, they knew something wasn't quite right with the weather.*
 - (C) *Having struck at a time when mankind still lived a subsistence existence from harvest to harvest, the summer of 1816 was a human disaster.*
 - (D) *In spite of all the hardship and destruction it caused, the Year Without a summer ultimately proved to have a silver lining—several of them, in fact.*

- _____ 2. Although the author does not specifically explain the “dry fog” mentioned in the second paragraph, the reader can infer that this phenomenon was the result of
 - (A) the lack of warmth in the atmosphere.
 - (B) a lack of moisture caused by the cold.
 - (C) volcanic debris in the atmosphere.
 - (D) a saturation of frozen precipitation.

- _____ 3. Under the subheading **Weird Weather**, what is the main idea of the first three paragraphs?
 - (A) the arrival of spring
 - (B) the short growing season
 - (C) the effects of the summer frosts
 - (D) the extreme weather contradictions

4. Compare the effects of the Year Without a Summer on New England to the way it affected Europe and the United Kingdom.

Fifteen questions in product download.