



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 12+; years 6 to 9

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Great action adventure from a new voice in Australian fiction
- Encourages discussions around friendship, secrets and teamwork
- Good example of fiction narrative with multiple points of view

THEMES

- Responsibility
- Science and magic
- Friendship
- Horror genre

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

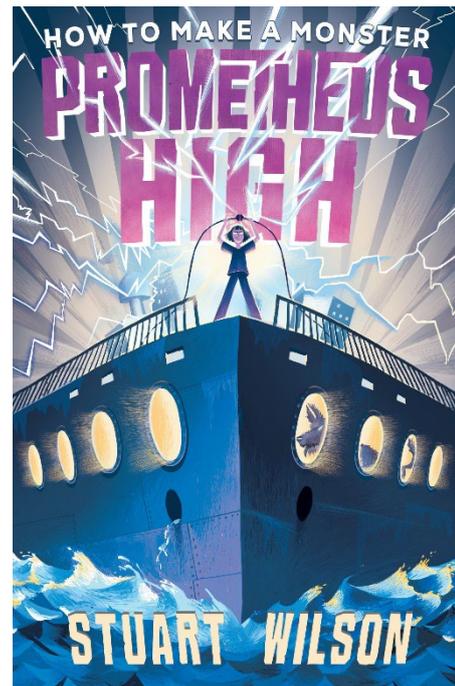
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Prometheus High 1: How to Make a Monster Stuart Wilson

PLOT SUMMARY

A hugely inventive, action-packed, fun and quirky – and occasionally dark – adventure for fans of *Skulduggery Pleasant*, *Nevermoor* or *Frankenstein*.

A rusting ocean liner.

Thirty students learning to resurrect the dead.

A murderous monster on the loose . . .

Just a typical day at PROMETHEUS HIGH.

Athena Strange's first semester at Prometheus High starts with a bang. But when her lessons in reanimation, robotics and skulkers move too slowly and she has trouble making friends, Athena decides to take matters into her own hands.

On a ship where science and magic collide, and the monster under your bed is probably very real . . . will Athena be able to hold her head above water?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stuart Wilson lives in Melbourne, Australia, with his wife and son. An omnivore when it comes to consuming stories, he reads too many books, watches too many films and plays too many videogames. Like Athena, he also chews on his lip when he's nervous. He hasn't, however, taken to his rooftop with alligator clips and a lightning rod in the middle of a thunderstorm to resurrect the neighbour's dead cat. Mainly because he rents, and the landlord wouldn't approve. *Prometheus High* is his first novel.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

What inspired you to write *Prometheus High*?

Without a doubt, it was my fascination with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, arguably the first modern science fiction story. I wanted to take the classic idea of a mad scientist toiling away in their remote laboratory, and put them in a more public setting that actively encourages such experimentation.

Which part of the book was the most fun to write?

For me, horror is inextricably linked to comedy, so I loved writing the icky replantation scene. I find it hilarious that most of the class wouldn't bat an eyelid at stitching together body parts. Since they are all there to make monsters, it stands to reason that they wouldn't be squeamish! My aim with *Prometheus High* has always been to strike a tone that I call 'middle grade macabre', so expect to see more hilariously horrifying moments in the future!

There's more than a passing nod to *Frankenstein* and the Prometheus myth. What is it about these stories that made you want to tell a reanimation story for young readers?

For me, practically every science fiction story is a retelling of the Prometheus myth – humans trespassing the realm of the gods (stealing fire/creating artificial life/cheating death) and then being punished for it. *Prometheus High* was designed to be a melting pot of the many types of reanimation myths that humans have told throughout the centuries. I wanted to interrogate the moral conundrums that would inevitably pop up, whilst writing an action-packed and comedic tale, so middle grade seemed like the perfect fit.

Do you have a favourite character in the book?

Goodness, it's hard to decide. Mx Hollybow is a stand-out. They dominate every scene they're in, and I love the fact that *Prometheus High*'s resident witch is ludicrously powerful yet also the friendliest and most laid-back of all the teachers. A perfect foil for the rigid and solemn Major Stein.

Moving forward, however, Marceline is quickly becoming my favourite. You don't see much of her witty and sardonic side in *How to Make a Monster*, but in Book 2 she really surprised me, often upsetting my plans for key scenes!

Are there any other pop culture influences or nods to horror classics we should look for?

I'm going to have to restrict my answer to a few choice elements, since I could go on all day. Doctor Singh is clearly inspired by *The Absent-Minded Professor*, whilst the sympathetic portrayal of the monstrous Creations has Terry Pratchett's fingerprints all over it, particularly the Discworld's approach to Igors and the novel *Feet of Clay*.

The ship itself is inspired by several lesser-known B-grade horror films, from *Deep Rising* (1998) to *Triangle* (2009), whilst the 'kids solving spooky mysteries aspect' has obvious echoes of *Scooby-Doo*, but also a favourite series of book from my childhood, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators*.

If you're into videogames, I like to think of my book as *Cold Fear* meets *Psychonauts*.

On a final note, the name of Athena's resurrected cat, Erwin, wasn't chosen by accident. I'll leave that for readers to figure out!

In the book we learn about different kinds of 'skulker' – nightmare creatures that are drawn to the dead! What's the most terrifying creature you came across in your research?

If you do an image search of Japan's *jikininki* I think you'll agree that they're particularly horrific. I love my horror, but the paintings inspired by those creatures are too much even for me!

You obviously love pop culture! Tell us about some of your favourites?

I could talk endlessly about my favourite movies (indeed, I often do so as a regular on the Chatflix Podcast) and the mixture of comedy and horror is usually a common element, from Hitchcock movies to *Scream*.

My favourite film of all time is *Labyrinth*, which pooled the creative talents of George Lucas, Jim Henson, Terry Jones, Brian Froud and David Bowie. If anyone dares to dismiss my love of that film as nothing more than nostalgia, they'd better be prepared for me to talk their ear off about its hidden depths.

When it comes to TV, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was a formative part of my teenage years, and in retrospect it's a great encapsulation of the gothic urban fantasy explosion. And if I can add something more obscure, an



anime TV series called *Steins;Gate* (not a typo!) is the best tragi-comic time-travel story nobody has seen.

What was your favourite horror story when you were a kid?

There was a short film from the 70s or 80s I saw once as a child but have never been able to track down since. It involved a young boy in a yellow raincoat playing around some standing stones on the English moors, who is haunted by a doppelganger that ends up taking his place when the boy's parents come to pick him up. The fact that I can't remember the title – or even find any evidence of it on the internet – makes it all the more terrifying in retrospect. Wait, was it even a film? Or a memory? *Was I that boy?*

Book 1 is set on a rusty cruise ship, but I hear the students are switching locations in Book 2 – can you give us a hint?

Book 2, *The Books of the Dead*, will be all about mummies! But in true Prometheus High fashion, they'll be learning about resurrecting them on board a zeppelin! Makes sense, right? Expect booby-trapped tombs, skydiving and not one but TWO new Creators.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

SS *Unbound*

Questions

1. How does the choice of setting effect the narrative of *How to Make a Monster*? What limitations does it impose on the story? Why?
2. How different would it have been if the story was set in a regular school like the one you go to? Which aspects of the plot would the author have had to rewrite or craft differently?
3. The SS *Unbound* is an ocean liner, as opposed to a cruise ship. What are the differences between the two?
4. Can you think of any famous ocean liners?
5. The SS *Unbound* and Prometheus High are named after the Greek titan Prometheus. How do you think the story of Prometheus connects to the ship and high school? Are their similarities?

Activities

- Draw a floorplan of the SS *Unbound*. Include the information given on page 32 about the different decks, and also other information about the ship's layout scattered throughout the story.
- Before passenger planes were invented, ocean liners were the fastest and most comfortable way to travel over long distances. Research how long a

journey from London to Sydney would have taken by ocean liner in the early 20th century.

- Write a list showing the progression of transportation over the centuries. Start with the first and end with the most recent you have heard about. (Don't forget to include different technologies, settings and animals.)
- Research the most famous ocean liner in history – the *Titanic*. Many books, exhibitions, movies and documentaries have been created over the years to tell its story. Why do you think the fate of this vessel still holds so much interest today?
- Choose a scene from the book and rewrite it as if it was set in your school. Which story elements would you have to change? Are there creative ways around them? (E.g. could the storm generator be placed next to a swimming pool to create lightning?)
- There were a lot of secrets on the *Unbound*: Athena was working on her Creation in the hidden lab, Godfrey was building his hexapod in a disused part of the ship, the Unseen Watcher was creeping around in the night, the Major was receiving mysterious shipments. Can you find evidence in the story that there were *other* characters keeping secrets? Write a list of these. Pick a minor character and create a secret for them.

Creations and Creators

Questions

1. If you were a Creator, what type of Creation would you give life to? Would you be interested in robotics? Reanimation? Or magic? Are there other ways you can think of to create?
2. Which is your favourite Creation in Prometheus High? Why? What about this particular Creation sets them apart from the others on board the *Unbound*?
3. Athena hides away and works on her own Creation. Why do you think this was a problem? Do you agree with Major Stein's assessment of Athena's behaviour? (See p. 215.) Can you pinpoint places in the story when Athena could have turned things around and asked for help?
4. The Major talks a lot about respect and responsibility in regard to creating a new life. Do you think Athena understands this by the end of the narrative? What do you think the rules should be around what the Creators do?



Activities

- Draw up a plan for your own Creation. Athena made a lot of mistakes when she Created Khepri. What would you do differently? Write a list of the steps you would take to make your Creation feel safe and welcome in its new environment.
- Marceline says that there is a *line* between Creators and Creations. (p. 270.) What do you think she means by this? Can you find evidence of this in the text? Can you also find instances when a Creator (or someone else) has expressed emotion for a Creation and its situation?
- Major Stein named her Creation, the Bluthund, 'Garmr'. Is this a real name or a made-up one? Research the word to decide if this was a fitting name for the Creation.
- Pick one of the Creators at Prometheus High. Write a TED Talk for them about their work and why it is important to society as a whole.

Intertextuality

Questions

1. How would you describe this book? Do you think it belongs in the horror genre? Why or why not?
2. Have you read any other books in the horror genre? What would you say were the key ingredients to this type of book?
3. What are the specific elements of the story that sets this novel in the horror genre?

Activities

- Author Stuart Wilson has drawn a lot of inspiration from the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. Research this novel and its author and find out why this was such a ground-breaking novel when it was published.
- What are similarities between Athena's Creation Khepri and Dr Frankenstein's monster?
- Research the history of the gothic novel. When did the horror genre first become popular? Which titles are considered the most iconic?

Diaries/journals

Questions

1. Have you ever kept a diary or journal? Did you write in it for a long time? Or for a short time? Why do you think it is difficult for some people to write in a journal on a regular basis?
2. Look at the style of writing used in the secret diary Athena finds. (pp. 136-140.) What makes the diary entries different from the writing used for the

main part of the story? (Take note of things such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and format.)

Activities

- Re-read the entries in the diary, then draw a cross-section of the pyramid Ulysses Dalton III and his colleagues explore. Include the booby traps and hidden compartments.
- After reading the diary entries on pp. 136-140, pick a date that hasn't already been written about and write an entry from Ulysses Dalton III's point of view. Make sure it fits with the information that has already been given in the entries, or fills in some blanks that haven't been given to the reader yet.
- Keep a diary for two weeks. After that time, look back at the entries in a critical way and work out which entries were the most interesting and why. What makes them stand out from other days in the diary?

Science and magic

Questions

1. The Major says that Prometheus High has many rich benefactors. (See p. 16.) Do you think these benefactors know what happens at Prometheus High? What does this say about the world of Prometheus High as a whole? Do you think there would be more people out there who believed in (or could use) magic apart from the teachers at Prometheus High?
2. Doctor Singh has named his drone Creations Edison and Tesla. Why do you think these are appropriate names for the drones?

Activities

- On page 27, Doctor Singh says that the ship has a protective perimeter called a Faraday Cage. Research what a Faraday Cage is. Can you think of other structures or modes of transport that have the same system?
- Go through the story and list instances of magic being used and then another list of science being used at Prometheus High. Do you think one is used more than the other? Which, if any, is more dominant at the school?
- Mx Hollybow uses a golden bell and a forked stick when using magic. Research these items and their connection to magic. Why do you think the author has given these items to Mx Hollybow?

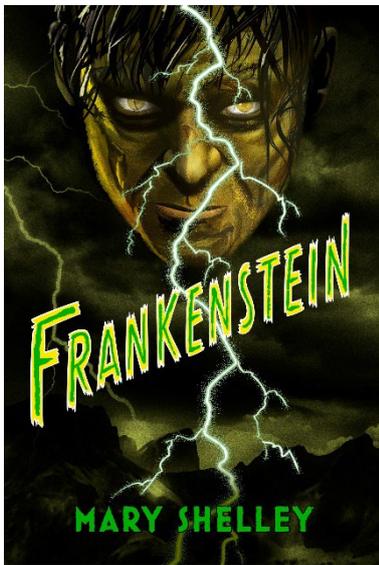


KEY QUOTES

1. *'She'd had a bond with Khepri. She'd seen it in his expression out on deck. He'd been scared and confused, yet he'd reacted instantly to the sound of her voice, moments before he'd been shot by the Captain and swept overboard.'* (p. 217.) Athena learned a very important lesson about responsibility after Khepri's death. How could Athena have done things differently in regards to her Creation? Make a list of all the things she could have done to Create Khepri in a safe and respectful way.
2. *'Prometheus High does work for clients all over the world, and they might be looking for something stronger, faster, smaller or taller than the average human – it depends on the application. We're not just here to Create. We're here to improve.'* (p. 79.) Who do you think these clients could be? What do you think they could be using the Creations for? If you were Major Stein or another member of the Prometheus High teaching team, would you think it was important to know what the clients were using the Creation for? Why or why not?
3. *'It came into focus then. Athena could make out the gondola on the underside of the huge elliptical structure. "The airship Atet!" the Captain exclaimed triumphantly. "Just in time for second semester!"'* (p. 273.) How do you think book two of Prometheus High will be different to book one? Look at the ad for book two – *The Books of the Dead* – in the back of *How to Make a Monster*. After looking at the cover illustration, write the first chapter of *The Books of the Dead*.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

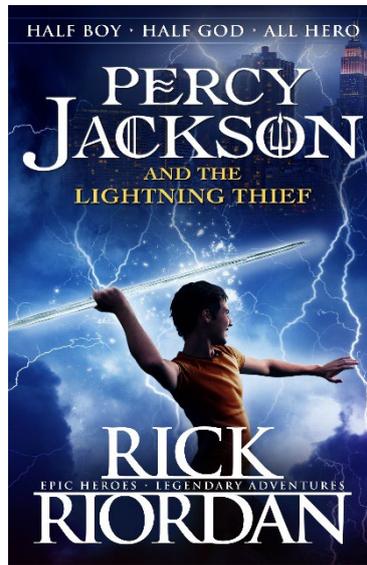


Frankenstein
by Mary Shelley

Victor Frankenstein is obsessed with the secret of resurrecting the dead. But when he makes a new 'man' out of plundered corpses, his hideous creation fills him with disgust.

Rejected by all humanity, the creature sets out to destroy Frankenstein and everyone he loves. And as the monster gets ever closer to his maker, hunter becomes prey in a lethal chase that carries them to the very end of the earth.

[Teachers' notes available.](#)



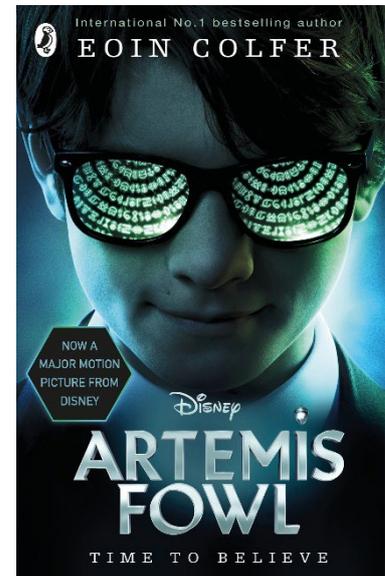
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief (Book 1)
by Rick Riordan

Half boy. Half God. All Hero.

Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood. I never asked to be the son of a Greek God.

I was just a normal kid, going to school, playing basketball, skateboarding. The usual. Until I accidentally vaporized my maths teacher. Now I spend my time battling monsters and generally trying to stay alive.

This is the one where Zeus, God of the Sky, thinks I've stolen his lightning bolt – and making Zeus angry is *a very bad idea.*



Artemis Fowl
by Eoin Colfer

Rumour has it Artemis Fowl is responsible for every major crime of the new century.

Just twelve years old and already he's a criminal genius, plotting to restore his family's fortune with a spot of corruption and kidnapping.

Kidnapping a fairy for ransom, to be precise.

Artemis Fowl has discovered a world below ground of armed and dangerous – and extremely high-tech – fairies. But he may have underestimated their powers. They *will* fight back. Is the boy about to trigger a cross-species war?

Let the misadventure begin.

ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Prometheus High 1: How to Make a Monster	Stuart Wilson	9781761042256	6+	\$16.99		
Frankenstein	Mary Shelley	9780593438503	6+	\$19.99		
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief (Book 1)	Rick Riordan	9780141346809	5+	\$17.99		
Artemis Fowl	Eoin Colfer	9780241387177	5+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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