



# Hideous Love: The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein

*Stephanie Hemphill*

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**Hideous Love: The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein** Stephanie Hemphill  
From award-winning author Stephanie Hemphill comes the fascinating story of Mary Shelley, a brilliant teenager who wrote one of the greatest literary masterpieces of all time: Frankenstein.

An all-consuming love affair.

A family torn apart by scandal.

A young author on the brink of greatness.

Hideous Love is the fascinating story of Gothic novelist Mary Shelley, who as a teen girl fled her restrictive home only to find herself in the shadow of a brilliant but moody boyfriend, famed poet Percy Shelley. It is the story of the mastermind behind one of the most iconic figures in all of literature: a monster constructed out of dead bodies and brought to life by the tragic Dr. Frankenstein.

Mary wrote Frankenstein at the age of nineteen, but inspiration for the monster came from her life—the atmospheric European settings she visited, the dramas swirling around her, and the stimulating philosophical discussions with the greatest minds of the period, like her close friend, Lord Byron.

This luminous verse novel from award-winning author Stephanie Hemphill reveals how Mary Shelley became one of the most celebrated authors in history.

## Hideous Love: The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein Details

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Author : Stephanie Hemphill

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**Stephanie Hemphill**

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## From Reader Review Hideous Love: The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein for online ebook

### Kayla Eklund says

For those that have been following my blog for a while, you'll know that my major goal this year was to get my TBR all caught up. As we near the end of the year, that looks like it's a goal that I'm going to be taking into 2019 with me. Anyways, I recently decided to read Hideous Love because it had been on my TBR for a couple of years. Unfortunately, it was just okay.

Hideous Love had some interesting parts, and some boring parts. Unfortunately, the boring outweighed the interesting. I didn't know anything about Mary Shelley's life prior to reading this book, other than she wrote Frankenstein. I'm not sure how historically accurate Hideous Love was, but I found it very interesting that she fell in love at such a young age, and experienced so much in life before she even hit her mid twenties. She was a very strong, admirable woman. She survived more hardships in her twenties than most people do in a lifetime, and never let it get the best of her.

Other than learning little tidbits about Mary Shelley's life, the rest of the book was entirely boring, and slow. There was a lot of gossip about side characters and putting them down, which I didn't care for at all. I could have cared less about the rumors about who was sleeping with whom. When those parts happened, I found myself skimming through them, or rolling my eyes. I just wanted to get back to the interesting facts about Mary Shelley. I also didn't like the way her husband treated her at all. I thought it was a selfish, pompous asshole that put his needs above hers, especially when she really needed him. In fact, I think Mary might be the only character in this book that I actually liked.

All in all, Hideous Love was just okay. I'm glad that I read it because it puts Frankenstein in a whole new perspective for me. However, it's definitely not something that I would pick up again to re-read. I think if someone wants to learn more about Mary Shelley, I would encourage them to pick up a biography of her instead. I know I'll definitely be reading one when I come across it in a book store or library.

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### Emily May says

[subject you to that (hide spoiler)]

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### Katherine says

It felt like I was reading a melodramatic teenage diary rather than a fictionalization story of Mary Shelley's life, but it still made for a fast read.

Review coming soon!!

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### Gabrielle Carolina says

I did not finish and stopped 20% of the way in.

Firstly, I do not like stories told in verse as a rule, Identical by Ellen Hopkins being the exception after Hopkins used her style to further illustrate her story. As that never seems to be the rule I get really frustrated when authors take such deep, original concepts, such as the life and love affair of Mary Shelley, and shorten it into choppy sentences pieced together and called "verse." Just because your word count is low does not mean you can allow your action to drop off, or be short-sided.

Hideous Love was tumultuous in the worst way, harried and almost illegitimate- I never found myself inside a setting, in Mary's head, or beside her love, looking at him through her eyes. The magnificent concept was absolutely ruined, I believe, by the author's choices.

I wouldn't even attempt this one if you're a verse fanatic. It was just that hideous.

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## **Bonnie says**

A copy of Hideous Love was provided to me by Balzer + Bray/Edelweiss for review purposes.

*'November brightens my spirit  
as I let go my fears  
and agree to travel  
to London to be with my Shelley.  
I visit Skinner Street  
and the Hunts.  
Also History of a Six Weeks Tour,  
my first book, appears this month,  
again with an anonymous author.'*

\*snore\*...

I didn't go into this surprised that this was verse and immediately discount it. I adore novels written in verse (well, as long as they're well done.) When done right, novels written in verse have the ability to evoke such beautiful emotion, flawlessly. Verse is essentially narrative poetry: beautiful words that flow, words that can hold you captive in their power, but words that also tell a tale.

I understand that verse is the next big writing style, but verse writing requires a certain finesse. You're not just telling a tale and you can't take your sentences, chop them up into tiny bits and format them to appear as poetry and call it verse. To me, this is exactly what happened with Hideous Love. The writing was choppy and stilted and didn't allow me to connect with the story. It also lacked any sort of emotion, which is the most vital and important part of a verse novel. There were no beautiful descriptive passages, it was simply a long line of 'this happened, then this happened, then this, and now that.'

Suffice it to say, I was extremely disappointed. I think choosing to write this novel in verse was a huge decision and definitely the wrong one. Unfortunately, I don't recommend this one at all.

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## **Nina says**

I got this book as an ARC from my local library and I'm so grateful to have picked it up. The minute I started

reading, I was hooked on the sparse prose and the strength of the main character.

I didn't know a thing about Mary Shelley prior to this but I now realize that she was an incredibly strong woman, and that her strength came from her faith in her writing and her love for her husband. As you will find out when you read the book, these things were tested time and time again. It's obvious Hemphill did her research, but the real skill was condensing eight incredibly tumultuous years of Shelley's life into a novel of such brevity.

By writing this novel in verse, Hemphill is making Mary Shelley accessible to many teens who might not otherwise read about her. And while this book would be great for reluctant readers due to the large amount of white space, I could also see this being used in an Honors English class as a study of this historical literary figure and her times. Like any good historical fiction novel, it educates the reader without seeming like a history lesson and makes them want to know more.

Next up, I plan to learn about Sylvia Plath through Hemphill's other novel, *Your Own, Sylvia*.

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### **Christine says**

I've been on a novels-in-verse kick lately and had been meaning to try this author's books for some time. This one actually seemed the least interesting to me just from the summary, but then I listened to an episode of Book Riot's new Annotated podcast about Mary Shelley and the writing of *Frankenstein* and my interest was piqued. I sort of wish I just left it at podcast though which was really well done and fascinating.

This book was perfectly fine, but it's chock full of misery, tragedy, scandal, death, betrayal, and repeated mentions of money trouble. I recognize that this book is based on real people and these things really happened in Shelley's life, but I had a hard time with this story. I can certainly appreciate how Shelley's tumultuous young life and all the things she lived through shaped her writing -- but I wish there had been more about her actual writing, which seemed to take a bit of a back seat to all the other things going on around her.

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### **Catherine Linka says**

I plucked *HIDEOUS LOVE* out of a box from HarperCollins, because the title was so odd. Then I noticed it was about Mary Shelley and saw who wrote it: Stephanie Hemphill. A novel in verse about the girl who wrote *Frankenstein*? Hmm. I'd give it a few minutes, because it was Stephanie Hemphill after all.

An hour later, I realized I'd been completely sucked in. Hemphill makes Mary Shelley come alive. Her voice, her passion, her emotions are beautifully captured in Hemphill's verse.

And the story of her life with Percy Shelley is unbelievable. It's a soap opera. You will be appalled by how Percy treated her, but you'll probably loathe Lord Byron even more.

This book was an unexpected treasure.

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## Kyle says

This review and more can now be found over at Book Probe Reviews where I'm now co-blogging!

1.5 stars

*I recieved a copy of this book from the publisher via Edelweiss. Thanks so much! : )*

Oh dear Lord, what the heck did I just experience?

Hideous Love wasn't a book that I ever really planned on reading exactly. It was one of those, if I can get it from the library or it ever becomes free on Kindle and I'm looking for a quick read in verse. However, once I saw that I could read this for free and be able to get my opinion about it out early before it's release (and I was about to go on an overnight trip to my aunt's post-Independence Day with my parents), I decided that a book in verse was the perfect read for a 2 hour car ride.

What ensued was an overdramatic tale of forbidden true wuv, musings about love, jealousy, wonderings if Mary's husband was cheating on her with her step-sister, drama-fests, constant traveling, and the occasional mentionings of writing.

Now, I haven't read ANYTHING by Shelley, not even her famous Gothic Frankenstein, but reading this has motivated me beyond belief to read some of her works, because while the actual story was far from enjoyable, nor does this book make me think that Mary is somebody I would've liked in real life, the parts about her writing are definitely the highlights of the book.

The parts about her and Shelley growing closer and traveling with Mary's step-sister (whose name I've actually already forgotten not even two weeks after completing this) were so boring, and so tedious, and seemed to add nothing to the plot except for a rift to grow between Mary and her step-sister. I mean, the writing of Frankenstein and the rest of Shelley's subsequent novel is definitely left as a sub-plot when I would've preferred it to be the central focus of the story.

I believe one of the weaknesses of the plot actually was the lack of structure. What was the central focus? If it isn't the writing, then it had to have been the romantic drama, and even that only lasted a little while before it ended and Mary's step-sister had moved on. It couldn't have been Shelley's multiple miscarriages, for while as tragic as it was, it hardly makes for interesting reading in YA (as a side note, none of this is really a spoiler. You can hear plenty about Shelley's miscarriages on her Wikipedia page. I sure did).

Unlike most verse novels, this was not completed quickly and swiftly. Even other boring verse novels for me have flown by. Now maybe it was because of how busy I was sitting with the adults being the only kid in the house, being bored out of my mind by family gossip I didn't care about, but I had plenty of time in the car to finish this sucker quickly.

Yet the boredom that overcame me was so powerful that the mindless family gossip was more appealing than going back onto my Kindle.

And my family gossip is boring.

Really boring.

So boring that I would rather learn about algebra for another eighty minutes then go through that torture again.

I've found that in really successful cases of verse novels, the verse style actually enhances the writing. This has been repeatedly proven to me in most of Ellen Hopkins's novels, and once by Lisa Schroeder's *The Day Before*. Stephanie Hemphill's writing, just like her plot, is rather bland, un-evocative, and boring.

Really I could keep going on and on and on about how boring this was, but I'm just going to end it here with one last warning:

I would much rather suggest reading something else besides this when it comes out October 1st of this year. I mean, if you're a Frankenstein fanatic then absolutely go for this, since it does cover the background of why she started writing it. It may have been a small part of the book, but if you're willing to spend \$20 on this book to see Hemphill's version of it, then go ahead.

I'm just afraid I won't be joining you on this one, or any of Hemphill's books again.

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### **Ksenia says**

While I enjoyed the author's *Wicked Girls* more, this exploration of Mary Shelley was quite intriguing but also frustrating because you saw how much Mary LOVED Percy and how it was thanks to her that he became so renowned after his death. So the frustration comes from the whole "behind every great man there is a woman" idea. Not the author's fault obviously because that's how it was, but it just really hits home today and makes you want to just boost Mary Shelley even more! OK, ramble done.

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### **Alicia says**

I didn't make the connection that Hemphill also wrote *Your Own, Syliva*, which I adored until after I read the book. This one is similar in that it's a verse novel, based on a literary figure, in this case Mary Shelley and her intriguing life.

Her family disowned her early on when she took up with Percy Shelley, who was still married with children when they pledged their love to each other. Mary's father disowned her and his friendship with Percy because of the indecency. Mary knew/thought she was in love, but they also escaped with her 'sister' as well, who became an important piece in her life, both for her annoyance as well as her moods and the fact that it was rumored most of their life that she and Percy were having an affair. It's about Mary's writing, Percy and her relationship that ran hot and cold for Percy seems like an intelligent, sickly, but provocative character who enchanted many, including other women, possibly. There was devastation as Mary ended up losing three children at different stages of their childhood to illnesses, that went almost unrecognized by Percy or other family. It was only after Mary and Percy's actual marriage (after his wife committed suicide) that her father, Mary's greatest influence, came back in to her life because their union was legitimate. It's about the literati of the time who wooed and spent extravagantly, but also had the craziest lives. Affairs, children, moving here and there, finances (mostly the lack of) and more.

A beautifully written verse that glimpses Mary's life and how Frankenstein probably came to be.

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### **Mara says**

I am super torn about this one. While I hated some aspects of the writing ("my Shelley" always made me roll my eyes and the prose isn't prose but just sentences divided by paragraphs) I still thought that this highlights Mary's passion and youth quite well. She was after all a teenager AND a writer. The loss of her children was done super well and tasteful as well, so this gets 3 stars after all.

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### **Savannah (Books With Bite) says**

Alright. This book is way more than what I thought it be. For sure, I love the writing. But the characters had my stomach in knots.

Love: Let me tells you the way this love is hideous. This love is doomed from the start. And iffy guy attracted to a young girl, romance moves fast. Oh and did I mention he is STILL married and has a child on the way while he is pursuing her. Yup.Cause he is. And I knew as soon as she feel for his antics there was no going back. This love isn't one I enjoyed but really cringed at. There were so many underlying lies and betrayals, yet once she was married to this man she looks the other way. I mean, in this time period you have too. She is woman and women in that time period solely relied on their husbands. But man, I felt sorry for this girl and what she went through.

Plot: This story is told in verse form. Like a poem. So it was a quick read for me. Each poem was written beautifully with full detail of what is happening in her life. From her courtship, to marriage, to giving birth, to struggles that any married couple goes through. Still, I think had this girl not been so infatuated with this man, she could of saved herself a lot of heartache.

Frankenstein: Because of that heartache, she is fueled to write. And write she does. She creates this magnificent story that goes on to successful. Even more successful than what she every thought.

Overall, I enjoyed this story. Though I would of preferred a more detail story rather than verse form. I mean, it does give good detail in verse but I think in a novel form it would have been richer. If you like verse form with plenty of drama, check this book out. Hideous Love is good.

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### **Hannah says**

Perhaps it's fitting to have a book about the tempestuous relationship between Mary Wollstonecraft and poet Percy Shelley written in free verse?

A lot of grief (miscarriages and dying children) and drama and a constant pall of family scandal all mixed up here. I probably found the annotated bibliography of works at the back to be the most interesting part.

As with pretty much any novel in verse (think Audacity or Brown Girl Dreaming), it doesn't take long to read.

## Christie Angleton says

2.5

Meh. The author paints Mary Shelley as a simpering, lovelorn teen who only writes as a means of distracting herself from pining after her moody partner, Percy Shelley. Maybe I'm being hard on this, having so recently read Charlotte Gordon's *Romantic Outlaws*, but I don't think this is a fair depiction of the fiercely independent advocate for women's rights that I know Mary Shelley to have been.

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