Percy Bysshe Shelley
The man who Stole FIRE
While yet as a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped,
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead...
from “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty”
August 4, 1792
**Percy Bysshe Shelley Born**

Percy Bysshe Shelley is born in Horsham, England. He is the first of seven children of the Whig Parliamentarian Sir Timothy Shelley and his wife Elizabeth Pilfold Shelley.

1804
**Enrolls at Eton**

Shelley begins his studies at Eton College, the boys' boarding school. He is mercilessly bullied by his classmates for his eccentric ways and dainty appearance.

April 10, 1810
**Enrolls at Oxford**

Shelley enrolls at University College, Oxford. He is indifferent toward his studies and barely attends class. Instead he writes, publishing his first novel, *Zastrozzi*, and books of suggestive poetry.

April 25, 1811
**Expelled from Oxford**

Shelley is expelled from Oxford after he publishes and distributes his essay “The Necessity of Atheism.” His father is furious.

August 28, 1811
**Marriage**

Shelley runs off to Scotland with a 16-year-old student named Harriet Westbrook. Though he does not love Westbrook and disapproves of the idea of marriage, he likes the idea of “moulding a really noble soul into all that can make its nobleness useful and lovely.”

1813
**Queen Mab**

Shelley self-publishes the long poem *Queen Mab*. The poem is an allegory for Shelley's political ideals.

Every time we say that God is the author of some phenomenon, that signifies that we are ignorant of how such a phenomenon was able to operate by the aid of forces or causes that we know in nature. It is thus that the generality of mankind, whose lot is ignorance, attributes to the Divinity, not only the unusual effects which strike them, but moreover the most simple events, of which the causes are the most simple to understand by whomever is able to study them. In a word, man has always respected unknown causes, surprising effects that his ignorance kept him from unraveling. It was on this debris of nature that man raised the imaginary colossus of the Divinity.
June 23, 1813
**Daughter Born**

Percy and Harriet Shelley's daughter Ianthe is born.

February 1814
**Meets Mary Godwin**

Shelley begins spending time at the home of the anarchist political philosopher William Godwin, whose ideas he admires. He meets Godwin's 16-year-old daughter Mary. Though Harriet is expecting their second child, he and Mary fall in love.

June 1814
**Elopes With Godwin**

Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin elope to Europe, accompanied by Godwin's stepsister Claire Clairmont. They spend six weeks touring the continent.

September 13, 1814
**Returns to London**

Percy Shelley returns to London with Claire Clairmont and his pregnant girlfriend Mary Godwin. The couple is forced to live apart while Shelley goes into hiding to escape his creditors. During his time in hiding he writes the poem *Alastor*.

November 30, 1814
**Son Born**

Harriet Westbrook gives birth to Percy Shelley's second child, a son named Charles.

February 22, 1815
**First Daughter with Mary Godwin**

Mary Godwin gives birth to the couple's first child, a daughter named Clara. The baby is two months premature and dies only a few weeks after birth.

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**Favor my solemn song, for I have loved**

Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched

Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,

And my heart ever gazes on the depth

Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed

In charnels and on coffins, where black death

Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,

Hoping to still these obstinate questionings

Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,

Thy messenger, to render up the tale

Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,

When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,

Like an inspired and desperate alchemist

Staking his very life on some dark hope,

Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks

With my most innocent love, until strange tears,

Uniting with those breathless kisses, made

Such magic as compels the charmed night

To render up thy charge;
Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favor my solemn song, for I have loved 
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched 
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps, 
And my heart ever gazes on the depth 
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed 
In charnels and on coffins, where black death 
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee, 
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings 
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost, 
Thy messenger, to render up the tale 
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours, 
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness, 
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist 
Staking his very life on some dark hope, 
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks 
With my most innocent love, until strange tears, 
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made 
Such magic as compels the charmèd night 
To render up thy charge;
Sailing with Monsters:
Playing Fire & Fiends

As a child, Percy (then called “Bysshe”) was fascinated with water and sailing. He made paper boats and set them into ponds and rivers. He never learned to swim though he loved to sail. On more than one occasion he had near fatal accidents sailing and almost drowned. He even dreamed once of drowning and wrote one poem as if he was at the bottom of the ocean looking up. He was also described by his sisters as inventing electrical machines and hooking them up to it. They also remember him with his chemical set (one that he took with him when he was sent away to school as a boy and later to Oxford), inventing potions and making explosives. He was remembered for setting fire to trees and making firecrackers. When bullied at school, on one occasion, Shelley stuck a fork through another student’s hand.

As a young boy he called forth spirits, ghosts, and the devil. He was also known to dress up as a “fiend” to frighten local village people.

At Eton, one friend described him as being particularly interested in “the metaphysical, absorbed in the scientific reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. He sought out the lore of magic and witchcraft and learned incantations for raising ghosts. AT field place he planned to gain entrance to the Charnel House and watch beside the bones of the dead. He tried to raise a ghost, drank from a skull cup, his mind ran on ideas of castles, mountains, towers, storms, and apparitions.

As a young adult, he had an incident at Tanyralt - an episode with an intruder, a demon, someone who attacked him and upon leaving the home the attacker yelled, “By God I will be revenged! I will murder your wife ...” and disappeared through the window.
“By God, I will be revenged! I will murder your wife!”
January 24, 1816

**Son Born**

Mary Godwin gives birth to the couple’s second child, William.

May 1816

**Summer in Switzerland**

The Shelleys take a summer holiday in Switzerland with Claire Clairmont, who is pregnant with the child of poet Lord Byron. Byron and Shelley become close friends. During the trip the novel *Frankenstein* is begun. It is published anonymously at first, later Mary is the given author. Questions remain as to the account of Frankenstein’s authorship.

October 9, 1816

**Fanny Godwin Dies**

Mary Godwin’s half-sister Fanny Imlay Godwin commits suicide with an overdose of laudanum.

November 1816

**Shelley’s Wife Dies**

Shelley’s wife Harriet Westbrook commits suicide by throwing herself into London’s Serpentine River. She was pregnant with the couple’s third child. Courts refuse to grant Shelley custody of his children with Harriet because of his unorthodox views.

December 30, 1816

**Marriage**


May 14, 1817

**Daughter Born**

Mary Shelley gives birth to the couple’s third child, a daughter named Clara Everina.
The Shelleys Publish

The novel *Frankenstein* is published on New Year's Day to immediate success. Shelley publishes the poems *The Revolt of Islam* and *Ozymandias*.

February 1818

**Travels to Italy**

The Shelleys travel to in Italy in order to convince Lord Byron to give his estranged lover Claire Clairmont access to their child. They remain in Italy for several years.

September 24, 1818

**Daughter Dies**

Clara Everina contracts dysentery and dies in Italy.

December 27, 1818

**Daughter Born – Maybe?**

A baby girl named Elena Adelaide Shelley is born in Naples and registered as Shelley's daughter. The identity of the mother remains unknown - scholars have speculated that she could be the Shelleys' nanny or Claire Clairmont. Others believe Shelley adopted an orphan to lift Mary from her depression after Clara's death. The baby is placed with foster parents and dies when she is 17 months old.

June 7, 1819

**Son Dies**

The Shelleys' three-year-old son William dies of malaria in Italy. The Shelleys now have no living children, though Mary is pregnant with their fourth.

November 12, 1819

**Son Born**

The Shelleys move to Florence. Mary Shelley gives birth to the couple's son Percy Florence, the only one of their children to outlive his parents. Percy Shelley writes the poems *The Masque of Anarchy* and *Men of England*. 
1820
**Prometheus Unbound**

Shelley publishes the play *Prometheus Unbound*, an imaginative drama depicting the torture of the mythological figure Prometheus by Zeus.

February 23, 1821
**Elegy for Keats**

John Keats dies of tuberculosis at the age of 26. Shelley writes the poem *Adonais* as an elegy for him.

July 8, 1822
**Percy Bysshe Shelley Dies**

Percy drowns in the Gulf of Spezia while sailing with a friend. A devastated Mary Shelley has his body cremated.

1824
**Shelley's Poems Halted**

Mary Shelley begins editing a book of her late husband's poems for publication. She is forced to stop when her father-in-law threatens to cut off support to her and her son unless she pledges never to publish any of his son's works during his lifetime.

October 1839
**Shelley's Poems Published**

Mary Shelley edits and publishes Shelley's collected poems. Timothy Shelley agrees to the publication, so long as it contained no memoirs of his son. The following month she publishes a collection of Shelley's essays and assorted writing.
'Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from Heaven,
She sees the black trunks of the waterspouts spin
And bend, as if Heaven was ruining in,
Which they seemed to sustain with their terrible mass
As if ocean had sunk from beneath them: they pass
To their graves in the deep with an earthquake of sound,
And the waves and the thunders, made silent around,
Leave the wind to its echo. The vessel, now tossed
Through the low-trailing rack of the tempest, is lost
In the skirts of the thunder-cloud: now down the sweep
Of the wind-cloven wave to the chasm of the deep
It sinks, and the walls of the watery vale
Whose depths of dread calm are unmoved by the gale,
Dim mirrors of ruin, hang gleaming about;
While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flowing iron,
With splendour and terror the black ship environ,
Or like sulphur-flakes hurled from a mine of pale fire
In fountains spout o'er it. In many a spire
The pyramid-billows with white points of brine
In the cope of the lightning inconstantly shine,
As piercing the sky from the floor of the sea.

_25_  
The great ship seems splitting! it cracks as a tree,
While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripped it of branches has passed.
The intense thunder-balls which are raining from Heaven
Have shattered its mast, and it stands black and riven.

_30_  
The chinks suck destruction. The heavy dead hulk
On the living sea rolls an inanimate bulk,
Like a corpse on the clay which is hungering to fold
Its corruption around it. Meanwhile, from the hold,
One deck is burst up by the waters below,

_35_  
And it splits like the ice when the thaw-breezes blow
O'er the lakes of the desert!
On July 7, following the trip to Pisa, they began their return trip. The following day, at Livorno, the two set off on the final leg to La Spezia, a trip of about fifty-five miles. A storm approached from the southwest, and most of the Italian boats had come into the harbor, but Shelley wanted to make it back that evening. His friend, Captain Roberts, watched the approaching storm from a lighthouse.

As the storm worsened, Roberts assembled a crew and took a large boat out to sea to intercept the smaller craft. He offered to take Shelley and Williams aboard, but Shelley refused. One sailor with Roberts called through a speaking trumpet, "If you will not come on board, for God's sake reef your sails or you are lost." According to the sailor, Williams began lowering the canvas, but Shelley grabbed him by the arm and ordered him to stop. The boat sank in the Gulf of Spezia later that evening. When Shelley's badly deteriorated body washed up on shore ten days later, a copy of Keats's poems was found in his back pocket.

Although no one knows for sure why Shelley perished, rumors of an old Italian seaman soon surfaced. The seaman supposedly confessed on his deathbed that he had been a crew member on a boat that intentionally rammed Shelley's ship in order to steal money they thought the poet had hidden on board.

As a brief insect dies with dying day,
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Drooped; o'er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play

"Trelawney, in his account of the recovery of Shelley's body, records that "the face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless," and by the time that the party returned to the beach for the cremation, the body was even further decomposed. In his graphic account of the cremation, he writes of Byron being unable to face the scene, and withdrawing to the beach. Shelley's heart was snatched from the funeral pyre by Edward Trelawney; Mary Shelley kept it for the rest of her life, and it was interred next to her grave at St. Peter's Church in Bournemouth."
Title Paper: Rowing with the Wind.

Page of notes containing:

A. Compare/contrast events in the movie/documentary of Shelley & Byron with notes taken in class.

What did you find most interesting & wonder if it was true or fictionalized for a movie? Must have 3 events listed with a reason why you found it interesting and also wonder as to whether it actually happened or not.
WHAT IS ALCHEMY? This is the $1,000,000.00 question! Is it science? Is it Magic? Is the goal to change metal to gold or to re-create mankind and find the “Philosopher’s Stone” which grants eternal life? Whatever it was, it was dangerous enough for those in the movement to worry about being persecuted, jailed, even put to death for being “sorcerers” and atheists!
Alchemy & Frankenstein

Gerber, as he was known by the Europeans, was an Arabian alchemist who lived in what we now know as Iraq. Some say he was interested in creating life through alchemy. He popularized the idea of the Philosopher's Stone which would transmute base metal into gold.

Gerber is responsible for giving us the word 'gibberish', derived from his name!

Key Contribution

Gerber, though not specifically mentioned by Shelley or in the novel Frankenstein is important in understanding alchemy as an early science that is transformational. To take something of a lower level, such as iron, and transform it to the highest potential, namely gold. His ideas of a philosopher's stone and the possibility of life through alchemy was to lead the way for others.
Alchemy & Frankenstein

Albertus Magnus  ca. 1200 - 1280 C.E.

Albert von Bollstadt, or Albertus Magnus, (which means Albert the Great) was a German monk, catholic Bishop, and practicing alchemist.

Thomas Aquinas, who was later to become, among other things, a famous alchemist, was one of his students.

Albertus Magnus, tradition states, created a robot-homunculus! (definition coming!)

Key Contribution

Albertus Magnus took alchemy to a WHOLE new level. As a catholic bishop AND alchemist, he combined the alchemist quest to elevate the base/lower order of things to the greatest of all dreams/nightmares, a miniature man or robot, one of the first homunculi! Man becoming like god, creating life through alchemy.
ALBERTUS MAGNUS, A DOMINICAN MONK, SPENT MANY YEARS ATTEMPTING TO CREATE AN ARTIFICIAL MAN. HE SPENT ABOUT THIRTY YEARS TRYING TO CREATE THE ARTIFICIAL MAN OUT OF BRASS, WAX, METAL, GLASS, AND LEATHER. HE GAVE THE ROBOT THE POWER OF SPEECH AND MADE IT HIS PERSONAL SERVANT. AT HIS MONASTERY WHERE HE RESIDED, THE ROBOT USED TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR VISITORS AND TALK TO THEM. ALBERTUS’ PROTEGE, THOMAS AQUINAS, SMASHED THE ROBOT TO PIECES WITH A HAMMER BECAUSE HE CONSIDERED IT POSSESSED.

RULES FOR THE PRACTICING ALCHEMIST

FIRST: HE SHOULD BE DISCREET AND SILENT, REVEALING TO NO ONE THE RESULTS OF HIS OPERATIONS.

SECOND: HE SHOULD RESIDE IN A PRIVATE HOUSE IN AN ISOLATED SITUATION.

THIRD: HE SHOULD CHOOSE HIS DAYS AND HOURS FOR LABOR WITH DISCRETION.

FOURTH: HE SHOULD HAVE PATIENCE, DILIGENCE, AND PERSEVERANCE.

FIFTH: HE SHOULD PERFORM ACCORDING TO FIXED RULES.

SIXTH: HE SHOULD USE ONLY VESSELS OF GLASS OR GLAZED EARTHENWARE.

SEVENTH: HE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY RICH TO BEAR THE EXPENSES OF HIS ART.

EIGHTH: HE SHOULD AVOID HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH PRINCES AND NOBLEMEN.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS
All Agree that it was the work of his life and took him 20-30 years to make!

destroyed in a moment!

Other reports say it was a beautiful female!
Alchemy & Frankenstein

Paracelsus 1493 - 1541 C.E.

Paracelsus viewed human life as part of the universe - mankind connected to stars and planets - matter and energy. If humans tapped into that same universal energy and had available matter, life could begin alchemically. The key link to Frankenstein is the use of Nature’s power, left over matter (dead flesh) and the creation of life!

Key Contribution

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Alchemy & Frankenstein

**Paracelsus**

*How to create a homunculus*

From: The Bride of Frankenstein
Directed by: James Whale
“Shelley’s scientific interests simply continued the enthusiasm for the mysteries and possibilities of Natural Science … ranging from the physical to the metaphysical, he absorbed the scientific reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus with eager enthusiasm for new sensation.”

From Newman Ivey White’s biography on Percy Shelley

"When I return home, my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus."

**Victor Frankenstein describing his childhood in Vol. I. of Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus**
Percy’s boyhood interest for the fantastic and imaginary was such that "any tale of spirits, fiends, etc., seemed natural to him from an early age." One imaginary occupant of his boyhood home who found an important place in Percy’s soul was "an Alchemist, old and grey, with a long beard." The young Percy found a large room under the roof where a lifted floorboard gave access to a deserted room where the alchemist lived. Shelley’s sister describes his games: "we were to go see the alchemist 'some day'; but we were willing to wait and a cave was dug in the orchard for the better accommodation of this Cornelius Agrippa." This persona as alchemist was never lost; at Oxford, Shelley was depicted as "the chemist in his laboratory."