Transcript for *She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein* by Lynn Fulton (Knopf Books for Young Readers, an Imprint of Penguin Random House)

Introduction (approximately 0:00 – 4:15)

Hi everyone! It's Colleen from the KU Natural History Museum, and I'm so excited for today's Story Book Science. Now I do want to wait for some folks to join us. So while we wait, I want to talk about who we will be reading about in the book! And we're going to be talking about Mary Shelley. This is a portrait of Mary Shelley. Now she was a writer from London, England, and she wrote many, many different things: poems, books, travel essays. But what she's most famous for is the science fiction tale, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

Now Mary Shelley wrote this book, and it's science fiction. So it's not a real story, but it's based on scientific practices that were happening at the time when she lived. Now the book is about Victor Frankenstein, the scientist, who doesn't really ask himself the question if he should do something. He just asks himself if he could do something. And because of that he ends up creating a creature and giving it life. But then he abandons it. So the story talks about whether we should do something, if it's right or if it's wrong. But it also teaches us about the importance of our actions and the consequences of our actions.

So while we wait, I want you to think about the creature that Frankenstein created and then abandoned. So when Frankenstein abandoned the creature, what do you think the consequence of that action was? How do you think the creature felt?

Alright. So it does look like some more folks have joined us. So let's go ahead and get started!

Now before we talk about the book, we need to talk about our guidelines. So for today's Story Book Science, although we are not in the museum, we are going to practice museum rules. So what that means is if you have a question or you have a comment, please feel free to write those! But you need to make sure you use kind and considerate words. If you respond to someone's question or comment, you also need to make sure to use those kind and considerate words as well. We're not in the museum, but we do want to make sure that this space is open and inclusive and safe for all who come. So can you use those kind and considerate words for me? Excellent! Thank you!

Alright. So welcome to today's Story Book Science! Today, I will be reading the book *She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein.* This book is written by Lynn Fulton, and it's illustrated by Felicita Sala. And it is published and being read with permission from Knopf Books for Young Readers, which is an imprint of Penguin Random House. Now I'm so excited to read this book! Not only do I love to read spooky science fiction tales, but I also love to learn from books. So this book, *Frankenstein*, as well as the book about Mary Shelley writing *Frankenstein*, it reminds us the importance of ethics. So making sure that we're determining what is right versus what is wrong, especially in scientific research.

Now I have two other things that I'd like to say. The first is that if you have a question or a comment, please feel free to ask that or write it. But just know I may not be able to see it immediately. And I'll only see it if there's time at the end. Additionally, if you need a partial transcript of this reading, that will be made available a little later today. And it will be on the website.

Now I have nothing else to add, so let's go ahead and get started!

She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein.

Reading from *She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein* (approximately 4:16 – 14:36)

She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein *includes copyrighted materials, and we do not have permission to include the written text of the book in this transcript.*

Conclusion (approximately 14:37 – 24:49)

The end.

Now maybe you've heard of *Frankenstein* before. And when you think of *Frankenstein*, what do you think of? What's the first thought that pops into your head? Do you think of a big, tall, scary monster? Maybe he's green. And does he have bolts in his neck? Maybe when you think of *Frankenstein* you think of this.

Now when we talk about *Frankenstein*, this isn't Frankenstein. Frankenstein is the scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who created a creature. The creature doesn't have a name. And this is just one way that people think of Frankenstein's monster. Mary Shelley didn't necessarily think that the creature had bolts in its neck, but this is one way we recognize Frankenstein's creature.

And when we talk about Frankenstein and his creature, we're talking about a story, a science fiction story. So it's not true. It didn't really happen, but it's based on scientific practices that were happening when Mary Shelley was alive writing this book. So in the book, Victor Frankenstein, he doesn't really think about what he's doing. He just has this desire to create life, and he doesn't stop to think if it is right or if it is wrong. So he's not thinking about ethics. So Victor Frankenstein he goes ahead, he creates a creature, and he brings it to life. And then he realizes that he's terrified. He's afraid of his creature. And so he abandons it. Now earlier I asked, what do you think the consequence of that action is? Victor Frankenstein created a creature, brought it to life, and then he ran away from it. How do you think that action makes the creature feel? Do you think it was harmful to the creature? Do you think it hurt the creature?

Now when we talk about *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley's science fiction tale, we can learn a lot about it! Now what can we learn from *Frankenstein*? Well, we can learn about ethics. So determining what is right and what is wrong. And we can also learn about the importance of taking responsibility for our actions because actions have consequences. So something happens, and our actions can harm people or they can help people.

Now ethics are something that scientists have to determine all the time, every day! They have to determine what is right and what is wrong. And one example at the museum of how scientists practice good ethics is when they prepare specimens. So I have a specimen that I'd like to share with you.

Now this specimen is a cotton rat. Now this cotton rat was made in 1947, so it's quite old. Now the scientist who prepared the specimen, they had to practice good ethics. And they had to practice good ethics doing many different things to prepare the specimen.

So the first thing they had to do was they had to collect it! Now when the scientist collected the specimen, they had to make sure they had permission to collect it. So they were allowed to go to a place and collect the specimen. They also had to make sure that the people in that place allowed them to collect it. Alright? So the first thing they did was they practiced good ethics. They did what is right and asked for permission. Then

when they had the permission, they collected the specimen as humanely as possible. So they inflicted the least amount of pain.

Then they had to prepare the specimen! So to practice good ethics in preparing the specimen, what they did is they made sure to take great care and be very gentle with the specimen. So all the fur is still there. The tail is still there. The hind limbs, the forelimbs, and even the whiskers. So the scientist had to take great care. They did what is right and treated the specimen very carefully and gently.

Then the scientist had to store it. And to practice good ethics in storing the specimen, they had to find a place that was safe, especially from pests like insects and beetles and bugs that might damage the specimen.

So the scientist that prepared this specimen, this cotton rat, they had to practice good ethics in all of their actions from collecting to preparing to storing the specimen. And their actions had consequences. The consequence of their actions is that this specimen still exists! It was created in 1947, but because of the good ethics they practiced in collection and preparation and storage, this specimen still exists for you and me and other folks to study it.

Now I have another specimen I want to share with you. And this specimen is a house sparrow.

Now this house sparrow, it's not as old as the cotton rat. It's, in fact, only two years old. It was made pretty recently. But the scientist who prepared this specimen did the same thing as the scientist who prepared the cotton rat. They practiced good ethics when they collected and prepared and stored the specimen. So the consequence of their actions is that we have a specimen that we can study for many, many, many years. Alright? So I'll let you look at the back of the specimen and those feathers. I'm going to put this specimen back.

Now sometimes, scientists don't always practice good ethics. And in some cases, scientists, especially scientists from a long time ago, when they were collecting specimens, they didn't do what is right. They did what is wrong. And they took a specimen without asking. They didn't have permission. So they stole it from a country, or they stole it from a group of peoples. And that's not right. The consequence of that action of taking a specimen without permission, from stealing it, is that it hurt people. It hurt the country, it hurt the people that the specimen was taken from. So scientists today can do what is right, and they can return specimens that may have been unfairly taken. Alright?

Now scientists, they have to work really hard to determine what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes, scientists in the past and even today have lied, and their lies have hurt people. So lying, which isn't right, it's wrong. It's an action that has a consequence, and that consequence can hurt people. Sometimes, scientists have lied and said that some people are better than other people because of what they look like or where they're from. And that lie, it's an action with a consequence. And that consequence is it hurts people, and it continues to hurt people. Sometimes, scientists, they've made people take medicine that they didn't need to take. They've made people have surgeries that they didn't need to have. And they weren't honest with the people. They didn't tell them what they were doing. They didn't tell them what was happening. And so they were lying. And again, lying is wrong. And the action of lying had consequences. And that consequence is that it hurt people. Alright?

So scientists, even today, constantly have to ask themselves what is right and what is wrong. And they have to understand that actions have consequences, and they need to take responsibility for them. Okay?

Now even if we're not doing scientific research, we can still practice good ethics and determine what is right and what is wrong and take responsibility for our actions. I think that's a very important part of Mary Shelley's

book. So I'm glad that we were able to talk about Mary Shelley and her creation of *Frankenstein*. And we were able to talk about all the lessons we can learn from that book!

Now I hope that you join me and Kestrel and Mira and Prakriti for the month of October. We're going to have a lot of fun Story Book Science STEM Challenges and other Story Books Science stories that look at the spookier side of science. And the next time I read a book, I'll read *I Am Marie Curie*. Now her research is a little spooky because her research focused on things that we can't see with just our naked eye. So I hope you join me when we read *I Am Marie Curie* together. I hope to see you soon! Bye!