



## Frankenstein Takes IUPUI Students on Tour

Digital view of a classic novel spies deeper meaning

Indiana residents were encouraged to read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* as part of the book's 200th anniversary; Jason Kelly, associate professor of British history at IUPUI, took that charge one step further, making the novel the centerpiece of an ambitious student project.

The nonprofit arts group Indiana Humanities had selected the novel for its One State/One Story reading program, but because Shelley traveled extensively throughout Europe in the years leading up to writing *Frankenstein*, Kelly saw the novel's geographic complexity as an opportunity to help his students see the work in a different light.

"I had always imagined what it would be like if [*Frankenstein*] got mapped out," Kelly says. "Some of the pieces of the book are selections from, or at least adaptations of, the travel narratives, that [Shelley] was writing at the time."

The result: A *Frankenstein Atlas*, an online resource that maps, describes, and connects the hundreds of locations in the book in extraordinary detail.

Students split the book into two or three



Reading for location and travel in *Frankenstein*, cover above, illuminates 19th-century life, says Kelly, pictured.

chapters apiece and then digitally coded each location, no matter how seemingly insignificant.

Each location includes its physical and aesthetic attributes and encompasses the actions and emotions exhibited by characters—such as Victor Frankenstein and Captain Walton—who were occupying the space.

For example, having trailed his creature to the Arctic Ocean, Victor records the following description: "Last Monday (July 31st), we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea room in which she floated."

For IUPUI student Sam Opsahl, the course and project fit his interest in public history—the kind of history done outside academia by groups such as community historical societies—and led to a richer and deeper experience with the novel.

"I got much more insight into who Victor Frankenstein is as a person," he says. "Obviously, the draw of the book is the monster, but because Victor is moving around so much throughout the map, I paid so much more attention to his story and how Shelley writes his character." ■