

Frankenstein (1931)

Director: James Whale

Writers: Garrett Fort (screenplay), Mary Shelley (novel)

Cast

Henry Frankenstein.....Colin Clive
Elizabeth.....Mae Clarke
The Monster.....Boris Karloff
Victor Moritz.....John Boles
Dwight Frye.....Fritz

Awards

"Frankenstein" (1931): No nominations. The odds were stacked against this adaptation of Mary Shelley's gothic classic in more ways than one. At that time, there were only three nominees in most of the Academy's major categories, except for Best Picture, which had eight contenders.



Synopsis

"Frankenstein" tells the tale of Henry Frankenstein, a doctor trying to discover a way to bring life back to the dead. Using human body parts from the recently deceased, he succeeds, but his creation is an abomination that causes only death and destruction.

Trivia

- The Monster's make-up design by Jack P. Pierce is under copyright to Universal through the year 2026 and licensed by Universal Studios Licensing, Inc.
- The Monster in this film does not physically resemble the character in Mary Shelley's novel. It was make-up artist Jack P. Pierce who came up with innovations such as the Monster's flat head, the bolts through the neck, the droopy eyelids, and the poorly-fitted suit. Any future Frankenstein film that features any of these physical abnormalities is taking its inspiration from Pierce's make-up work.
- The movie's line "It's alive! It's alive!" was voted as the #49 movie quote by the American Film Institute (out of 100) in 2005.
- Edward Van Sloan (Dr. Waldman) also makes an uncredited appearance as himself in the film's prologue, warning audiences of what follows.
- SPOILERS: The picture was scripted and filmed with Dr. Frankenstein seeming to die in the mill with his creation, but was instead released with a hastily re-shot happy ending, wherein Henry survives to marry Elizabeth (see "Trivia"). However, the sequel, Bride of Frankenstein (1935) literally followed the first scenario, and consequently just before "Bride" opened this film was reissued with the original finale restored. This movie was seen this way in all subsequent theatrical releases of the old Hollywood era, but when the entire package of classic Universal horror films was made available to television in the 1950s, the prints of the original movie carried the happy ending, and the incompatibility with the opening scene of "Bride..." confused new viewers.