

Readers' Guide



Frankissstein

Jeanette Winterson

Jonathan Cape

Other novels by Jeanette Winterson

Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere (2018)

Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal? (2011)

The Powerbook (2000)

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985)

About the author

Jeanette Winterson was born in Manchester, UK on 27 August 1959. Adopted by Pentecostal parents she was raised to be a missionary but left home at 16. After graduating from Oxford University she worked for a while in the theatre and at 25 published her first novel, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*. She scripted the novel into a BAFTA-winning BBC drama. She has written ten novels and a memoir, as well as children's books, non-fiction and screenplays. She is Professor of New Writing at the University of Manchester, and in 2018 was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours. She lives in a wood in the Cotswolds and in Spitalfields, London.

About the book

In Brexit Britain, a young transgender doctor called Ry is falling in love – against their better judgement – with Victor Stein, a celebrated professor leading the public debate around AI.

Meanwhile, Ron Lord, just divorced and living with Mum again, is set to make his fortune launching a new generation of sex dolls for lonely men everywhere.

Across the Atlantic, in Phoenix, Arizona, a cryonics facility houses dozens of bodies of men and women who are medically and legally dead... but waiting to return to life.

But the scene is set in 1816, when 19-year-old Mary Shelley writes a story about creating a non-biological life-form. *'Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful.'*

Spanning multiple timeframes, *Frankissstein* is funny and furious, bold and clear-sighted, exploring gender identity and the far-reaching consequences of the AI revolution we are already living through. What will happen when homo sapiens are no longer the smartest being on the planet? Jeanette Winterson shows us how much closer we are to that future than we realise.

What the judges thought

"Winterson plays with hybridity, gender, sex, technology and Romantic literature in a joyful comedy that examines the artifice of intelligence and how we get to redesign and reimagine the future of humanity."

Discussion points

How do the two narratives of Mary Shelley and Doctor Ry Shelley, set at different times, link together?

How much is the novel a criticism on the way technology, in particular artificial intelligence, could be used?

Is it important to the story and the message of the novel that Ry is transgender?

What role do misogyny and sexism play throughout the novel?

Themed reading

Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*

Philip K Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Louisa Hall *Speak*

Cass Hunter *The After Wife*

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/20/frankissstein-jeanette-winterson-review-inventive-reanimation-of-a-classic>

<https://www.sublimehorror.com/books/frankissstein-by-jeanette-winterson-review/>

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/jeanette-winterson-profile-frankissstein>

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/frankissstein-by-jeanette-winterson-review-gf2qvt3l8>