

Teacher Resource Guide

Frances and the Monster

by Refe Tuma

She created a monster ... Now she has to stop it.

Frances Stenzel is an aspiring scientist, and one day she'll be a world-famous inventor like her parents ... if they'd only let her leave the house.

When Frances is left home yet again with only an infuriatingly clever robot named Hobbes for company, she enters her parents' off-limits laboratory, determined to claim her freedom and prove her scientific mettle.

Instead, she accidentally awakens her great-grandfather's secret and most terrible invention—an enormous monster who breaks out of the manor and disappears into the city below.

With her pet chimp, Fritz, and a reluctant Hobbes by her side, Frances sets off to find the monster, facing a persistent constable, angry locals, and an unexpected friendship along the way. But with the trail going cold and the monster nowhere in sight, Frances is running out of time before her future science career, and the town itself, are doomed forever.

Note for Teachers/Parents: The information below is designed to help provide background for students as they read **Frances and the Monster** and be a starting point for discussions.

Refe Tuma is a writer and dinosaur photographer living in Kansas City with his wife, four kids, and a dog named Boris. He is the co-creator of **Dinovember** and the **What the Dinosaurs Did** picture book series, including **What the Dinosaurs Did Last Night**, named a Best Children's Book of the Year with Honors by Bank Street College. **Frances and the Monster** is his debut novel.
(Oh, and it's pronounced 'reef.')

World War 2

Frances and the Monster takes place in Bern, one of the capitol cities of Switzerland, in September, 1939. Germany has invaded Poland, leading to declarations of war from France and Britain. Switzerland, which borders both Germany and France, has declared itself neutral. While the war doesn't impact Frances or her adventure directly, the threat of war looms in the background of every scene.

Bern

Bern is one of Switzerland's capitol cities. It was founded in 1191 by Duke Berthold V who claimed to have fought a mythical bear to a draw on the site of the future city. The Old City district, nestled in a curve of the Aare river, preserves much of the city's original Medieval architecture, including covered arcades, red tiled roofs, towers, and ornate 16th century fountains. Other landmarks that appear in the book are the Zytglogge—a medieval tower housing an elaborate clock, and the famous Bear Pits, where live bears were held in a kind of zoo.

TSCHAGGATTA

Each year in Lötschental valley, about 85 kilometers, or 53 miles from Bern, people dress in elaborate, hand-made masks and costumes and run through the streets, chasing children and tourists. The tradition dates back to some of the remote region's earliest myths and legends of wild spirits called Tschägättä.

In **Frances and the Monster**, the festival is celebrated in Bern in the fall, but this represents some creative license on my part. In real life, the festival takes place in the Lötschental valley in February.

Technology

The secret labs of Victor and Mary Stenzel, as well as that of Albrecht Grimme, house many fantastical inventions that would have represented big leaps in technology if they were released into the world in 1939. However, I based as much as I could on technology accurate to the era. For example, major advances in computer science were being made all over the world, from the Alan Turing's paper proposing of a "universal machine" (On Computable Numbers..., 1936) to John Vincent Atanasoff, a professor of physics and mathematics at Iowa State University, proposing the first electric-only computer, to the founding of Hewlett-Packard in California in 1939. While the idea of an intelligent robot like Hobbes is still a long way off, his computer, shown in chapter 6, is essentially period accurate.

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Frances and the Monster is a story about the ethics of scientific exploration and technological progress, the challenges of growing up in a patriarchal society, the relationship between parents and children, and classism. Woven throughout these elements is the idea of coming to terms with our scars. Everyone has scars, whether literal, physical scars or the metaphorical scars of past trauma or experiences that left us with something—fear, anxiety, shame, anger, etc.—that now hold us back. How we choose to deal with those scars and difficult experiences can have a major impact on how we see ourselves and the choices we make as we grow up.

Text-to-Text Connections

Have students brainstorm other books they have read with similar themes. How are they similar? How are they different?

Text-to-Self Connections

Have students think about their scars. How have they reacted like Frances? How have they reacted differently than Frances?

Common Core

(list of standards covered in this guide)

4th Grade: ELA RL 4.1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10; W 4.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

5th Grade: ELA RL 5.1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10; W 5.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

6th Grade: ELA RL 6.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10; W 6.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

7th Grade: ELA RL 7.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10; W 7.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

First Line Predictions

August 29, 1939, was a Tuesday.

Before you begin reading the book, think about the first line of the book. What can you learn about the story from this sentence? What predictions can you make about what will happen in the story?

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Reading Response Questions

A few ideas for incorporating these questions into your reading of **Frances and the Monster**...

- Have students keep a journal while they read and answer questions as you read.
- Utilize Think-Pair-Share and discuss these questions throughout the reading.
- Select a couple of questions for students to write a longer written response. This is an opportunity to cite evidence in their writing to support their answers.

As students are reading, have them think about the chapter titles. Do they think the title summarizes the chapter well? Would they name any chapters differently?

Note: Some questions are meant to be asked before reading the chapter (making predictions), some are meant for while reading the chapter, and some are meant for after reading the chapter.

Chapter 1 - An Unwelcome Surprise

Why do you think Frances doesn't go anywhere and rarely sees anyone?

Why do you think Frances keeps a small collection of tools in her nightstand?

What is different about Frances' ears?

What is unusual about Frances' new tutor?

Chapter 2 - H.O.B.B.E.S.

What relationship has Frances had with her tutors? Why do you think the relationships have been like this for Frances?

Chapter 3 - Operation Disorder

What is the basement of the manor like?

What is Frances' plan for getting rid of H.O.B.B.E.S. (Hobbes)?

Chapter 4 - Detained

Was Operation Disorder successful?

What realization do you think Frances has about Hobbes?

Chapter 5 - A Grimme Discovery

What does Frances discover at the end of the hall?

What does Frances find in the iron box?

Who, or what, do you think the two bloodshot eyes belong to?

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Chapter 6 - A Magic Potion

Do you agree with Frances' decision to drink Fritz's intelligence serum?

What does Frances do to Hobbes?

Does the intelligence serum work for Frances? If so, how?

Chapter 7 - Multiple Critical Errors Detected

How and why is Frances borrowing Hobbes body?

What did Frances do to the body she found?

PREDICT: What do you think will happen to the body?

Chapter 8 - Docile Upon Animation

Why do you think Frances feels regret and fear, and not pride, when she realizes her experiment didn't fail?

How do they attempt an escape from the laboratory?

Why do you think the monster was not as docile as the notebook predicted?

Chapter 9 - Fear May Follow

What was the result of Frances using a magnet to retrieve Hobbes head?

What clue does France notice that makes her realize Hobbes might be better at reading human emotion than she first suspected?

How would you stop the monster?

How do you think Frances will make a plan to go outside and stop the monster when she's never been outside?

Chapter 10 - The World Outside

How would you feel if you were leaving your house for the first time in years?

How did Fritz manage to escape from the monster?

Do you think Frances should continue on with her plan of finding the monster or go back to the Manor?

Chapter 11 - Constable Willermus Montavon

How does Frances convince the Constable not to put her in the truck?

"You are always solving the problem in front of you, never considering the consequences down the line. I'm afraid we have made a formidable enemy tonight." What do you think this means?

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Chapter 12 - A Helping Hand

What happens when Luca discovers Hobbes?

Why do you think Luca so desperately wants to go with Frances instead of going home?

Chapter 13 - 1401 and a Half

What do you think makes Frances look spooky to Luca?

What three words would you use to describe Luca's mother?

Chapter 14 - An Unexpected Visitor

In what ways is Luca's house similar to Frances's and in what ways is it different?

Chapter 15 - Any Way Out But Through the Door

How do Luca and Frances escape from the constable?

Chapter 16 - Every Calculation Ends in Your Deaths

What advantage do Luca and Frances have over the constable?

How are they spared from their, "Every calculation ends in your deaths" fate?

Do you think Frances should continue pursuing the monster or should she return home and let the authorities handle the situation? Why?

Chapter 17 - A Clock Strikes Midnight at 7:15 in the Evening

What's the solution to Frances' injured leg?

Chapter 18 - Madame Melina's Medicinal Herbs

What surprises the kids about Madame Melina?

Chapter 19 - Bait

What is the plan for catching the monster? Do you think it will work? Why or why not?

Why do you think Frances' great-grandfather created the monster?

Chapter 20 - A Brief Respite

What examples can you give of how Frances is uncomfortable with human interaction?

Why do you think Frances felt a need to put on a hard shell with her clothing?

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Chapter 21 - Impersonating an Officer of the Law

How do you think they can get the call before the constable?

Why does Frances feel like she is still the same fragile, helpless girl as she was when she got into the auto accident?

What evidence do you have that she is not the same fragile, helpless girl?

If you could give Frances a pep talk, what would you say?

Chapter 22- A Propane Lamp, a Coil of Wire, a Roll of Tape

How do the people describe the ogre?

Why do you think the monster took what he did from the store?

Chapter 23 - Sacrifice

What does Frances notice is happening to Fritz?

What do you think Fritz is hoping will happen after he sacrifices himself to the constable?

Chapter 24 - The Bear Pits of Bern

What does Frances learn about Hobbes' purpose?

Chapter 25 - Lights-Out

What do you think happened to Luca?

Chapter 26 - Nobody of Any Consequence

How did Mr. Gangie become the sewerman?

What do you think Mr. Gangie has found in the sewer that he keeps locked up?

Chapter 27 - The Drowned Museum

What do you think the monster is looking for? What do you think Frances realizes the monster has been looking for?

Do you think using Hobbes is a good idea? Why or why not?

Why do you think Hobbes was warning Frances to look behind her?

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Chapter 28 - A Collection of Cages

What three words would you use to describe how Luca is likely feeling in the cage after Frances has been taken out to fix the monster?

How have Frances's feelings changed about the monster?

What do you think Luca needs to do before they head to the surface to find the monster?

Chapter 29 - City of Monsters

What clever disguise does Luca come up with so the constable can't find them?

Who do you think carried Frances out of the parade?

Chapter 30 - Grimme

What news does Luca deliver after he meets Frances' parents?

Chapter 31 - Pitchforks and Torches

How have Frances' feelings about the monster changed?

What does the constable due to Frances?

Why do you think Frances would, "Defend such a creature?"

Chapter 32 - The Girl in the Snow

What does Frances realize about herself when she wakes up?

Think back about the story, were there any clues in the story that Frances is like the monster/Grimme?

Chapter 33 - Everything You Could Ever Need

If you had a journal of regrets, what is one thing you would write about?

Epilogue

Do you think you can you do the wrong thing for the right reason? Is it still the wrong thing?

Visualize It

Draw what you imagine based on the descriptions in the book.

The Laboratory

(The secret one Frances discovers in chapter 5)

Frances in the Elevator

(Chapter 9)

Luca's House

(Chapter 14)

The Monster

(As described by the townspeople in chapter 22)

Similes

Similes compare two things using **like** or **as**. Authors use similes to help readers create a picture in their mind of what is happening in the story. How many similes can you find in **Frances and the Monster**? Try writing three similes of your own to describe the monster.

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Research

Frances and the Monster takes place in Bern, Switzerland. Choose one of the following and research more about the topic. Then, share your information with someone else.

Duke Berthold & the great bear
The Zytglogge
Tschäggättä of Lötschental
Bern, Switzerland



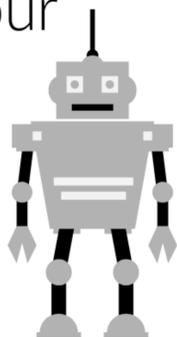
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STEAM

Create your very own robot monster. Get creative with the supplies you have to design and build a robot of your own.

Bonus: Are you able to design and build working parts that bring your monster to life.

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Go Live!

Create a vlog series as if you were a journalist following Frances and Luca's adventures through Bern. Get creative with how you would share significant events along the way.

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Note for Teachers/Parents: Students can choose one, or more, of these activities related to **Frances and the Monster**.

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Vocabulary Bookmark

Frances and the Monster may contain words that are new for you.

Use this list as a bookmark and while you are reading, use context clues to investigate the meanings of these words. On the back of the bookmark, write down other new words you find in the book.

Anomalies
Bulbous
Concealed
Cumbersome
Decipher
Disjointed
Docile
Elixir
Formidable
Grimace
Ill-Mannered
Impertinence
Jagged
Periscope
Primate
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