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# Through the Tempests Dark and Wild

Donna Cardon

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Darrow, Sharon. *Through the Tempests Dark and Wild*. Illustrated by Angela Barrett. Candlewick Press, 2003. ISBN 0763608351. 16.99. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft--Juvenile fiction; Authors, English--Juvenile fiction;

Though this book contains some biographical information, this is not a biography of Mary Shelley. It is a highly fictionalized story about two years that Mary, then Godwin, spent visiting the Baxter family in Scotland. Mary, with her friends, Robert and Isabel Baxter, would wander the beach during the day and tell stories by the fireplace at night. Some of the stories are ghost tales. One of the stories that Mary tells is about her own birth, her mother's death and her estrangement from her father and stepmother. After the summer with the Baxters, Mary is called home and resumes an uneasy relationship with her family. In a lengthy afterward, Darrow tells of Mary's controversial marriage to Percy Bysshe Shelley and of her creation of the Frankenstein story. Darrow includes a selected bibliography at the end.

This is a melancholy introduction to a melancholy figure. The tone of the text is a little sad and brooding. The muted and often dark tones of Barrett's beautiful painterly illustrations heighten the somber mood. Darrow tries--not very successfully--to make a case that Shelley started forming the Frankenstein story while at the Baxter's home. However, in the afterward she mentions Shelley's own claim that the idea for the story came to her as a dream after an evening of telling spooky stories at the home of Lord Byron. Despite this inconsistency, this is an intriguing introduction to the life of Mary Shelley. It is also an attractive resource for educators who want to introduce the genre of horror stories.