

THE GLENCOE LITERATURE LIBRARY

Study Guide

for

Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley



New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

To the Teacher

The *Glencoe Literature Library* presents full-length novels and plays bound together with shorter selections of various genres that relate by theme or topic to the main reading. Each work in the *Library* has a two-part Study Guide that contains a variety of resources for both you and your students. Use the Guide to plan your instruction of the work and enrich your classroom presentations.

In **For the Teacher** you will find these time-saving instructor aids:

- *About the Work*: pertinent background information on the work and a detailed synopsis of its plot.
- *Media Links*: annotated listings of audio, visual, electronic, and print resources related to the work.
- *Teaching Options*: high-interest activities for introducing the work and individualizing instruction.
- *Options for Using Related Readings*: suggested approaches to the Related Readings included with the work.
- *Answer Key*: detailed answers to all questions and reading activities.

For the Student consists of these reproducible blackline masters:

- *Meet the Author*: a lively overview of the author's life.
- *Introducing the Work*: background information that provides a meaningful context in which to read the work.
- *Before You Read* and *Responding* pages: pre- and post-reading questions and activities.
- *Active Reading*: graphic organizers for students to complete as they read.
- *Test*: a comprehensive two-part test of the work.

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Send all inquiries to:

Glencoe/McGraw-Hill
8787 Orion Place
Columbus, OH 43240

ISBN 0-07-821281-2

Printed in the United States of America

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 045 04 03 02 01 00

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About the Work

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**

In Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, a young scientist brings on his own destruction by constructing an artificial man and bringing it to life. Through the characters of Dr. Frankenstein and his creature, this powerful novel explores the themes of ambition, science, moral responsibility, social isolation, and psychological balance. With its wild and desolate settings and its supernatural being, *Frankenstein* is an example of the gothic novel. With a scientific fantasy at the center of its plot, the novel is also regarded as a forerunner of science fiction.

Parts of this novel refer to people of various racial and religious groups in ways that students may find to be offensive. You may wish to point out that at the time when Shelley was writing, people typically had little access to information about other cultures, and it was not uncommon for people to hold negative views toward cultures they didn't understand.

SYNOPSIS

Frankenstein is a **frame story**, a structure of tales within tales. The story opens and ends with the letters of an explorer named Robert Walton, who is searching for the source of magnetism in the northern polar regions. There he finds and rescues Dr. Victor Frankenstein from certain death in the icy ocean. While he is recovering, Frankenstein tells Walton the story of his life. Set within Frankenstein's narrative and Walton's letters is the first-person story told by the creature Frankenstein created.

Frankenstein, a young man from a happy family in Geneva, Switzerland, becomes obsessed with the idea of bestowing life on inanimate matter. He studies chemistry and new theories of electricity at a German university. With this knowledge and with body parts from corpses, Frankenstein creates a large manlike being and brings it to life with an electric spark. Finding the creature grotesquely ugly when it is animated, Frankenstein runs away from it. The creature quickly disappears. For months afterward, Frankenstein suffers from what he calls a "nervous fever" in which hallucinations of the creature torment him.

After his recovery, Frankenstein learns that his young brother William has been murdered near the family home in Switzerland. A young woman who lived with the Frankenstein family is unjustly accused and hanged for the child's murder. On his trip home, Frankenstein sees the creature and realizes that he killed the child. Frankenstein seeks solitude high in the Alps, and there he is confronted by his creation. The creature, who has learned to talk and evade people, persuades Frankenstein to listen to his tale of persecution and loneliness.

The creature tells how he hid in a shed attached to the cottage of a poor family in the woods. Observing the family—a blind man and his two grown children—daily through a tiny hole in the wall, he was moved by their love for each other. As they taught a foreign friend how to speak their language, the creature also learned along with her. The creature also learned about what it means to be human by reading three books he found. He gathered his courage to approach the blind man alone. He was received sympathetically, but when the others returned they drove him away in fear. From that moment, the creature vowed revenge against humankind and especially his creator. Face to face with Frankenstein, he demands that his creator make a companion to relieve his agonizing loneliness. Frankenstein agrees, but on the verge of animating the female creature, he destroys it. The creature responds by resuming his rampage of revenge. He kills Frankenstein's closest friend and later Frankenstein's new bride. Frankenstein vows to kill the monster. He pursues the creature all the way to the Arctic but then dies on Walton's ship. The creature comes to Frankenstein's deathbed, confesses his remorse, and vows he will end his own life.

Media Links



Videos

Show a film version of the novel as a follow-up to students' reading. Ask students to compare and contrast the characterizations of the major and minor characters in the film and in the novel.

- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, directed by Kenneth Branagh (Columbia TriStar Home Video, 1995; 123 minutes; Rated R for horrific images).



CD-ROMs

To give students a chance to find their own pathways into the novel, have them explore one of the following multimedia programs.

- *Essential Frankenstein* (Byron Preiss Multimedia, 1994) contains pop-up annotations to the original 1818 text, animated introductions to each chapter, and many movie stills and film clips.
- *Frankenstein: The Art and Legends* (Michael Callis) makes connections between art, literature, and scientific achievements of the period.



Audiocassettes

To support students' reading skills, have them listen to a tape recording of each chapter before they read on their own. Occasionally, have them read as they listen.

- *Frankenstein* on eight cassettes (Books on Tape, 1984)



Music

Both musical and literary works from the Romantic era (about 1780 to 1830) stressed the expression of emotions, including fear and awe. To underscore this idea, play the following composition, an eerie song written by a leading Romantic composer and based on a legend.

- *Erlkönig* ("The Erlking," 1815) by Franz Schubert



Further Reading

For the Teacher

- *The Frankenstein Syndrome: Ethical and Social Issues in the Genetic Engineering of Animals* by Bernard E. Rollin, 1995. A nontechnical and anecdotal discussion of the benefits and dangers of genetic engineering
- *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*, edited by Stephen C. Behrendt, 1990. Classroom-tested methods for teaching Shelley's novel

For the Student

- *Mary Shelley's Monster: The Story of Frankenstein* by Martin Tropp, 1976. Engaging analysis of all facets of the novel including related literature and films (Photographs)

Be sure to preview all media links to determine whether or not the material is appropriate for your class.

Teaching Options

Options for Motivating Students

A Dark and Stormy Night . . .

Help students connect the novel to popular depictions of the monster

- Many students will be familiar with movie versions of Frankenstein's creature, such as the 1931 classic *Frankenstein* with Boris Karloff as the monster and *Young Frankenstein* (1974), a comic parody starring Gene Wilder as Dr. Frankenstein. Even students who haven't seen the movies may have preconceived ideas about the monster. Have students discuss what they know about Frankenstein's creature, and note their responses on the board. Then ask how many students have seen a movie about Frankenstein's monster. Encourage them to describe the monster, the other main characters, and the plot as you continue to note their descriptions on the board.
- Point out that while Shelley's novel has inspired filmmakers, cartoonists, and storytellers of all kinds, the resulting interpretations are often very different from the original in terms of character, plot, and theme. Tell students that the novel is both a spine-tingling thriller and a serious meditation on important issues. Would they characterize the other interpretations of Frankenstein that way? Why or why not?

- Have groups present brief oral reports based on their findings. Point out to students that the novel they are about to read may touch on ethical issues similar to those raised by biological research today.

Just Like Life

Help draw students into the story by having them re-enact everyday situations that parallel those in the novel.

- Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to devise and rehearse a skit based on one of the following situations.
 - A person becomes so caught up in a project that he or she becomes sick and neglects family and friends.
 - A person feels that another person has treated him or her unjustly.
 - A person is feeling lonely and rejected and wants to be liked by others.
- After each skit, discuss how each of the characters might have been feeling, and why. At the end of the activity, tell students that *Frankenstein* will require them to see an issue from multiple points of view.

Biological Research

Encourage students to research contemporary issues in biological science.

(Interdisciplinary: Science)

- Ask students to list examples of recent developments in biological research, such as organ transplants, genetic engineering of plants, gender selection of babies, and cloning. Have students form small groups and select one of the listed topics to investigate. Encourage them to look for print and Internet sources of information that discuss the ethical issues raised by their topic.

Meeting Individual Needs

The formal writing style and thrilling storyline of *Frankenstein* make it appropriate for average readers. The activities that follow will help you present the novel in ways that meet the needs and interests of all students.

Less Proficient Readers

Help students to identify and visualize the settings of the novel. (Interdisciplinary: Geography)

- As students read, have them mark and label the different locations of the novel's actions on an outline map of Europe that includes the Arctic region. In a separate key, or on the map if it is large enough, have them state briefly the main events that occur in each setting. Have them connect the locations as Victor Frankenstein travels from place to place.
- Have students use books, magazines, and Internet resources to find photographs of the various settings. Allow time for students to share and comment on their pictures with the class.

English Language Learners

Help students identify the different narrators in *Frankenstein*.

- Students who are learning English may need guidance in order to identify different narrators in *Frankenstein*. Tell students that the novel is written in the first-person point of view—which means that the pronoun *I* is used—but that different narrators recount the story at different points in the book. In order to understand who the pronoun *I* refers to at any time, students should pay attention to the clues that signal a shift in narrator.
 - Tell students that a good part of the book is told in letters. If they are unsure who is writing the letter, they should look ahead to the end of the letter, where the author's name will be given.
 - Tell students to watch for sentences at the very beginning or ending of letters or chapters that signal a change in narrator. For example, if a chapter ends with the statement, “he thus began his tale,” students can assume that the next chapter opens with a new narrator.

- Suggest that students create a log in which they record who the narrators are in each section of the book. They should keep the log as they read and check it against those of their classmates so that they can identify and clear up any confusion that may arise.

Gifted and Talented

Help students understand the novel's literary allusion.

- Ask students if they have ever heard a sports-caster use the term “Cinderella team” to describe a team in a tournament. Have a volunteer explain what the term means (a team that comes from behind and performs so well that it reaches or wins the final rounds). Have students note the main similarity between Cinderella's situation and the team's situation. Point out that writers of all kinds, from journalists to novelists, use literary allusions, or references to literary characters or works. Discuss with students why writers do this (to evoke emotion, suggest a mood, establish character, give depth to a theme).
- Remind students that it is not unusual to encounter a literary reference they don't understand. When they encounter an unfamiliar literary allusion, suggest that they:
 - try to connect the word or phrase to their own knowledge or experience
 - check for explanatory footnotes
 - look up a summary of the literary work in an encyclopedia or other reference
- Prepare a bookshelf for the better-known poems and books Shelley refers to in the novel, such as Wordsworth's “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” Percy Shelley's “Mutability,” Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werter*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Also include literature guides that contain summaries of these works. Bookmark the pages where each work is discussed. Encourage students to browse and spot-read in these books.
- Suggest that they note each allusion and write a few sentences about why Shelley might have included it.
- You might point out that many of the poems alluded to were written by poets who were friends or acquaintances of the Shelleys or who were actively writing at the same time.

Options for Using Related Readings

Related Readings	Making Connections to <i>Frankenstein</i>
<p>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein by Roger Ebert (BLM page 33)</p>	<p>In this movie review, Roger Ebert compares a recent film version of <i>Frankenstein</i> with both the novel and other film productions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before students read, have them discuss the kinds of decisions a screenwriter and a director have to make when turning a novel into a movie. • As students read the review, ask them to note similarities that seem to exist between the movie and the novel. • After students read, ask them whether or not Ebert’s review makes them want to see <i>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein</i>. Encourage them to explain their reaction using specific quotes from the review.
<p>A Frankenstein Monster Ended Up Being a Lamb by Ed Regis (BLM page 34)</p>	<p>In this book review, Regis summarizes how a scientific fantasy became a reality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before students read, write on the chalkboard a definition of <i>cloning</i> (creating an individual that is a genetic copy of its parent from a single body cell of that parent). Note that the first cloning of a mammal, a sheep named Dolly, occurred in 1997 in Scotland. • After students read, ask them if the book review made them reconsider their current attitude toward cloning. If so, how? Did the review add to their understanding of the science of cloning?
<p>A New Life by Ramsey Campbell (BLM page 35)</p>	<p>This modern gothic short story contains many allusions, both direct and indirect, to <i>Frankenstein</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead a brief discussion about point of view. <i>Frankenstein</i> is told from the point of view of three different characters: Walton, Frankenstein, and the creature. Each serves as narrator for part of the novel. • Note that the point of view in Ramsey’s story is much more limited. In fact, the third-person narrator’s limited point of view is the source of the story’s mystery and suspense. • After students read the story, have them list allusions to <i>Frankenstein</i>.
<p>The Golem by Isaac Bashevis Singer (BLM page 36)</p>	<p>This retelling of an old European legend features a character with striking similarities to Shelley’s creature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before students read, tell them that when Mary Shelley wrote her novel, she was probably aware of the European legend of the golem. She may have been influenced by this and similar legends of manlike giants or monsters. • Point out that the legend of the golem inspired a German silent film, <i>The Golem</i> (1920), which influenced the creators of the original Hollywood <i>Frankenstein</i> film in the 1930s. • After students read, ask them what insights the legend and <i>Frankenstein</i> offer about the strengths and weaknesses of human nature.
<p>. . . That Thou Art Mindful of Him by Isaac Asimov (BLM page 37)</p>	<p>In this science fiction story, two robots plot to outwit their makers. Like <i>Frankenstein’s</i> creature, robots are popular images in the media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students of the many ways the Frankenstein image is used in the popular culture. With students, list on the board situations in which they have been entertained by the image since their earliest schooldays. (Halloween costumes, party themes, comic strips, cartoons, games, and toys) • List some roles of human-like robots in film and television productions. Discuss the human attributes that are given to robots. Discuss why Shelley’s superhuman creature and intelligent robots might be so appealing to readers.

Answer Key

ACTIVE READING

Letters 1–4

Situation: The stranger—was involved in a search for knowledge but lost everything because of it. *Goals:* Walton—benefit humankind; achieve personal glory. The stranger—achieve knowledge and wisdom. *Attitude:* Walton—passionate; determined; sacrificing. The stranger—was passionate now despairing; wants to warn Walton about his mistakes. *Personal qualities:* Walton—idealistic, ambitious, courageous, intelligent, considerate of others. The stranger—determined, intelligent, passionate, gentle, sad, obsessed

Chapters 1–10

Victor’s father: respected judge; caring parent; *Victor’s mother:* from poor background; orphan; kind, loving parent; *Elizabeth:* beloved “cousin” of Victor; beautiful; sweet; *Henry Clerval:* Victor’s close friend; son of a merchant; interested in literature, languages; thoughtful; generous; *William:* five-year-old brother of Victor; gentle, high-spirited; *Justine:* adopted by Frankenstein; good-natured; unselfish; *The creature:* hideously ugly; physically strong; lonely; intelligent; articulate

Chapters 11–16

Possible answers include: enters a village and is stoned; feels confused, disappointed by cruelty; hides in a small hut and secretly observes a loving family; longs to join them; discovers three books in woods; longs to be virtuous but begins to hate his creator; tries to befriend the child William but strangles him when he screams; realizes he can cause misery to others

Chapters 17–21

Frankenstein postpones marriage to Elizabeth. He travels to England for latest research and collects materials for the project. Frankenstein travels with Henry to Scotland. Frankenstein goes alone to work on an isolated island. *Climax:* Frankenstein nearly completes female creature, then destroys it. The creature sees and vows revenge. Frankenstein is lost at sea and lands in Ireland. He is accused of murdering Henry. He becomes mentally ill in prison but is freed. He heads home to Geneva, worried about his family’s safety.

Chapters 22–24

Sample quotes: *Frankenstein:* “I was cursed by some devil, and carried about with me my eternal hell.” “Yet, when I am dead, if he should appear; . . . swear that he shall not live.” *The creature:* “My reign is not yet over.” “Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being!” “Do you think that I was then dead to agony and remorse?”

RESPONDING Letters 1–4

Recall and Interpret

- Walton is an explorer searching for the source of magnetism near the North Pole. He is curious, enthusiastic, and determined. Students might say he is intelligent and daring.
- Walton longs for a friend. He (probably) believes the sailors are uneducated and beneath him.
- At first Walton is surprised that the stranger, who is near death, questions where the ship is going. As Walton nurses him back to health, he comes to admire the stranger’s intelligence and gentleness. Walton has been wishing for a friend and the stranger shows an interest in the project.

Evaluate and Connect

- The poem inspired Walton’s interest in unexplored regions. Like the mariner, the stranger wants to warn Walton not to follow in his path. The harsh, remote setting and the theme of guilt suggest an ominous, gloomy mood.
- Walton says he would give up his fortune, even his life. The stranger has apparently sacrificed his health and happiness.

RESPONDING Chapters 1–10

Recall and Interpret

- Elizabeth was adopted by Frankenstein’s parents and may someday be his bride. Frankenstein seems to love her but he also stays away from her for a long time. He values his work more than family ties.
- He imagines creating a noble new species that would be grateful to him. He studies chemistry, galvanism, death, and decay. When he sees how ugly the creature is, he is disappointed, frustrated, and frightened.
- He stays away from his family and from his schoolmates. He senses that he may be doing something evil. He could be described as singleminded.

Evaluate and Connect

- He feels despair and guilt. “I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind . . . my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.”
- The creature says he was good but that misery and loneliness made him evil. Like Adam, he is the first of his kind and feels alone.

RESPONDING Chapters 11–16

Recall and Interpret

- He hides in a small shelter attached to the family’s cottage and observes them daily. They are loving and attractive. The family’s fear and horror at the sight of him makes him angry. He feels hatred for the first time.
- He feels he is as isolated and alone as Adam. He feels he is as bitter and envious as Satan. He is angry at his creator for making him hideous and solitary.
- He strangles William and puts evidence of the murder on Justine. The creature knows he can harm his enemies. He demands that Frankenstein create a companion for him.

Evaluate and Connect

- Both characters suffer. Students may sympathize with the creature more because he wants to be good and has no hope of love.
- Students may say that it is unlikely the creature could learn to read from such difficult books. They might also find the sudden appearance of Safie farfetched.

RESPONDING Chapters 17–21

Recall and Interpret

- He says Frankenstein alone has the power to grant him happiness. If he can be happy, he will not hate and destroy others. Victor becomes depressed. He postpones his wedding.
- He fears the new creature might be more evil than her mate, refuse to leave Europe, or help create a “race of devils.” Students might say that Frankenstein denied companionship to the creature, and the creature wants to hurt Frankenstein in the same way.
- After dumping the remains of the second creature into the sea, he sleeps and his boat is driven off course. He is accused of murdering a man found strangled. Little William was also strangled. This second murder by strangulation causes Frankenstein to connect the murder to the creature and to himself as the creature’s creator.

Evaluate and Connect

- When the creature’s hopes are dashed, the reader knows he will retaliate. The creature’s threat foreshadows personal tragedy for Frankenstein.
- Unlikely events include Frankenstein’s sailing hundreds of miles in less than a day and the creature’s ability to locate Henry and carry the body to the place where Frankenstein landed.

Answer Key *(continued from previous page)*

RESPONDING Chapters 22–24

Recall and Interpret

1. He promises to tell her his terrible secret after they are married. He pretends to be happy while preparing himself for a conflict with the creature. The creature has sworn to ruin his wedding night.
2. Elizabeth is murdered by the creature. Frankenstein had thought that the creature's threat applied to him, not his wife. He vows to destroy the creature or die trying.
3. Frankenstein endures cold and fatigue but never slackens in his pursuit. The creature taunts Frankenstein with written messages and leaves food to draw out Frankenstein's suffering. Neither of them achieve the satisfaction of winning. They both die.

Evaluate and Connect

4. After Frankenstein dies, Walton resumes the narrative in his letters. Shelley shows both characters through the eyes of a third person and contrasts the ambitions of the two.
5. Students may say Frankenstein was overreaching in ambition or idealism and failed to take responsibility for his actions. The creature was unable to check his destructive impulses.

RELATED READINGS

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

1. The true subject is the monster. The real issue is whether or not Frankenstein has created a monster or a creature worthy of human sympathy, understanding, and respect.
2. Ebert likes the portrayal of the creature and the performance of DeNiro. He doesn't like the frame story or the overly dramatic and sensational presentation of the story. Overall, he thinks the movie is a near miss.
3. Students may expect the movie's creature to display the same loneliness and articulate sensitivity that the novel's creature does. They may expect the movie's creature to be smaller and less violent than the book's creature.

A *Frankenstein Monster Ended Up Being a Lamb*

1. The scientists knew how to alter sheep genetically to produce milk containing drugs to treat human disease. Cloning these sheep would create a "drug factory."
2. Because cells, while genetically complete, come from organs and tissues that have specific functions, scientists weren't sure that a specialized cell could produce a complete new organism. Operating on tiny cells is difficult.
3. The reviewer seems to approve of cloning and is excited about the possibilities. Shelley, whose novel warns about scientific excesses, would probably be less enthusiastic.

A *New Life*

1. He remembers being pulled down in the river. He thinks back to being alone in the dark as a child.
2. He thinks he might be in prison, arrested for his beliefs. He discovers that his limbs are bound.
3. He hoped, in defiance of his lifelong beliefs, that reincarnation was possible. He fears he has been reborn into an unfamiliar body as punishment.
4. In both works, a scientist has created a manlike creature which he sees as a failure. Both are made from corpses; in the short story the creature retains the memory of the brain "donor." The mood in both is dark and brooding and the setting is Germany in the late 1700s.

The Golem

1. The emperor persecutes them, and they are often falsely accused of killing Christian children. A mysterious figure who may be a Jewish saint appears and tells Rabbi Leib to make a golem to save the Jews from harm.

2. The rabbi sculpts a figure out of clay. To animate it, he inscribes the name of God on its forehead in Hebrew. He feels awed by the creative power of God.
3. The golem will no longer do as he is told. He begins to mature, learns to speak better, wears clothes, and looks more human. He is lonely. He destroys property and makes people fearful.
4. The rabbi feels compassion for the golem, but his sense of duty to God and to society makes him put the golem to rest when his job is done. Frankenstein rejects his creature, which has disappointed him by being ugly. Later Frankenstein briefly sympathizes with the creature and starts to create a female creature. In the end, he becomes vengeful toward his creature. Unlike the creature, the golem finds a human being who loves him.

. . . *That Thou Art Mindful of Him*

1. It's the fear that artificial humans will turn on their creator. Some people today fear the control that computers now have over human life.
2. He hopes that humans will not fear a robot that doesn't look like them. He is seeking a robot that can perform functions related to ecology, as earlier robots had, and overcome human's fear of damage to the environment. People might not fear a robot that doesn't compete with them.
3. Students might say society should give the creatures an education and protect them from harassment, while forbidding the creatures to hurt humans or each other.

TEST

Recall and Interpret

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1. c | 2. c | 3. d | 4. b |
| 5. b | 6. b | 7. c | 8. b |

Evaluate and Connect (any two)

1. *Possible themes:* intellectual striving must be balanced by compassion; people must take responsibility for their actions; personal ambition can destroy relationships, or good intentions can have destructive outcomes. Students should support their answers with evidence from the novel.
2. Students may note some of the following similarities and differences: Both Frankenstein and the creature are intelligent, sensitive, and vengeful. Human companionship seems more important to the creature, though, because, although Frankenstein makes declarations about loving his friends and family, he stays away from them for long periods of time to work alone in his laboratory. Unlike Frankenstein, the creature is loved by no one. Originally Frankenstein was motivated by curiosity and ambition, while the creature is motivated by the desire to learn and to find companionship. Later, both are motivated by the desire for revenge. Some students may find the creature more sympathetic, since he never received any love or affection.
3. Frankenstein, like the ancient mariner of Coleridge's poem, has made a terrible mistake that ruined his life and wants to warn another person. Like Prometheus of Greek myth, Frankenstein is destroyed for breaking through the bounds of what is human. The creature, like Adam, is alone and longs for a companion. Like Milton's Satan, he was once good but became evil and destructive. Frankenstein, too, can be likened to Milton's Satan, who once had good motives, and to God, as a creator and punisher.

Meet Mary Shelley



[Frankenstein] offers a rare opportunity to investigate the way that an individual work can merge into general consciousness: how a personal act of imagination may become myth.

—Christopher Small in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley's fame as a writer rests on a single novel, *Frankenstein*. Millions of people who have never heard of Mary Shelley know her story through the films and other media inspired by the novel. The word "Frankenstein" has become a synonym for monster, and Shelley's tragic tale—about a well-intentioned student of science and his human-like creation—has been given myth-like status.

Born in 1797, Shelley was the daughter of two of England's leading intellectual radicals. Her father, William Godwin, was an influential political philosopher and novelist. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, was a pioneer in promoting women's rights and education. Shelley never knew her mother, who died ten days after giving birth, but she was influenced throughout her life by her mother's writings and reputation.

When Mary was four, her father remarried. Mary received no formal education, but Mr. Godwin encouraged his daughter to read from his well-stocked library. The Godwin household

was also a place of lively intellectual conversation. Many writers visited Godwin to talk about philosophy, politics, science, and literature. When Mary was nine, she and her stepsister hid under a sofa to hear Samuel Taylor Coleridge recite his poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." This popular poem later influenced Shelley as she developed her ideas for *Frankenstein*.

Mary's future husband, the widely admired poet Percy Shelley, was one of her father's frequent visitors. When Mary was sixteen, she and Percy eloped to France. They married in 1816 and lived together for eight years, until Percy's early death. They spent their time traveling in Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, visiting with friends; studying literature, languages, music and art; and writing. In her journal, Shelley described her years with Percy as "romantic beyond romance." Her life during this period was also filled with personal tragedy. She gave birth to four children in five years, three of whom died as infants. Many critics have pointed out that thoughts of birth and death were much on Shelley's mind at the time she wrote *Frankenstein*.

Mary Shelley did not put her name on the novel when it was published in 1818. Many reviewers and readers assumed it was written by Percy Shelley because he had written the preface. Mary Shelley's name was first attached to the novel in the 1831 edition for which she wrote the introduction. Remembering back fifteen years, she explained in the introduction how an eighteen-year-old came to write the unusual novel.

After Percy's death in 1822 in a boating accident, Mary Shelley returned to England and supported herself, her son, and her father with her writings. She wrote four novels, including *The Last Man* (1826), a futuristic story about the destruction of the human race. She also wrote short stories, essays, and travelogues. To preserve her husband's literary legacy, she collected and annotated Percy Shelley's poems for publication. She died in 1851.

Introducing the Novel

I busied myself to think of a story, . . . One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror.

—Mary Shelley

In the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley explains how she came to write her famous novel. In the summer of 1816, she and Percy Shelley were living near the poet Lord Byron and his doctor-friend John Polidori on Lake Geneva in the Swiss Alps. During a period of incessant rain, the four of them were reading ghost stories to each other when Byron proposed that they each try to write one. For days Shelley could not think of an idea. Then, while she was listening to Lord Byron and Percy discussing the probability of using electricity to create life artificially, according to a theory called galvanism, an idea began to grow in her mind:

*Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated;
galvanism had given token of such things:
perhaps the component parts of a creature might
be manufactured, brought together, and
[endued] with vital warmth.*

The next day she started work on *Frankenstein*. A year later, she had completed her novel. It was published in 1818, when Shelley was nineteen years old.

Frankenstein is an example of a **gothic** novel. This type of novel was popular between 1760 and 1820. The main ingredients of the gothic novel are mystery, horror, and the supernatural. The word *gothic* itself has several meanings. It can mean harsh or cruel, referring to the barbaric Gothic tribes of the Middle Ages. It can also mean “medieval,” referring to the historical period associated with castles and knights in armor. In literature the term applies to works with a brooding atmosphere that emphasize the unknown and inspire fear. Gothic novels typically feature wild and remote settings, such as haunted castles or wind-blasted moors, and their plots involve violent or mysterious events.

While the atmosphere of Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is nightmarish, the novel is much more than a

horror story. Shelley’s central characters—a young student of science and the man-like being he creates—are both morally complex. Through their conflict, Shelley poses profound questions about science and society and about the positive and destructive sides of human nature. These questions struck a chord with Shelley’s readers in the early 1800s—a time of startling breakthroughs in science and technology and a growing faith in the power of science to improve human life. Today, in a world where scientific advances such as cloning and genetic engineering seem to be redefining life itself, her questions are no less relevant.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The novel takes place in the late 1700s in various parts of Europe, especially Switzerland and Germany, and in the Arctic. *Frankenstein* was published in 1818 in England at the height of the Romantic movement. This movement in art and literature was based in part on the feeling of optimism about human possibilities that pervaded Western culture after the American and French revolutions.

In England the post-revolutionary period was also a time of economic suffering and social disorder as the new industrialism transformed English society. Shelley’s readers lived in hopeful, but also disturbingly turbulent, times.

The Romantic movement, which lasted from about 1798 to 1832, pulled away from the period known as the Enlightenment, which emphasized reason and logic. English writers of the Romantic period believed in the importance of the individual. They valued subjectivity, imagination, and the expression of emotions over rational thought. The typical Romantic hero, found especially in the poetry of Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, is passionate, uninhibited, and unconventional. Often the hero is an artist who is a social rebel or a melancholy outcast from society.

The Romantic poets, including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John

Keats, and Percy Shelley, transport their readers to the private worlds of the poets' imaginations. Often, they isolate themselves in nature and celebrate its beauty or its elemental rawness.

They were also attracted to stories and settings from the past. Percy Shelley, for example, made Prometheus, the symbol of creative striving in Greek mythology, the hero of his poetic drama *Prometheus Unbound*.

Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein* was labeled "romantic fiction" by an early reviewer. It is a powerful work of imagination that uses exotic natural settings and emphasizes the emotions of fear and awe. Many scholars also see her novel as a critique of Romantic ideals. The "modern Prometheus" she holds up for readers' evaluation, Dr. Frankenstein, is an ambiguous character who may or may not be worthy of our admiration.

Did You Know?

In the early 1800s, scientists were on the verge of discovering the potential of electricity. At this time, scientists knew about the existence of static electricity as well as electricity produced by lightning. But they were just beginning to discover that electricity could be produced by a chemical reaction.

In the 1780s, Luigi Galvani, a professor of anatomy in Bologna, Italy, conducted experiments on animal tissue using a machine that could produce electrical sparks. He concluded that animal tissue contained electricity in the

form of a fluid. Galvani's theory of "animal electricity" was shown to be incorrect, but he had proven that muscles contracted in response to an electrical stimulus. His research opened the way to new discoveries about the operation of nerves and muscles and showed that electrical forces exist in living tissue. In the novel, Frankenstein learns about the controversial theory of "galvanism" as part of his scientific training at a university in Germany. Today, galvanism refers to a direct current of electricity produced by a chemical reaction.

Before You Read

Frankenstein Letters 1–4

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What do you think spurs people to explore the unknown?

Share Ideas

In a small group, list ways in which people throughout the ages have explored the unknown. Also, identify some reasons why individuals devote themselves to a life of exploration and discovery. Does such devotion involve sacrifices?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how two eighteenth-century men's lives are changed as they pursue their separate dreams of exploring the unknown.

BACKGROUND

The Arctic

When the novel opens, an explorer named Robert Walton is organizing an expedition through the Arctic, the area around and within the Arctic Circle and near the North Pole. The Arctic Ocean covers most of this region, and more than half of the ocean's surface is frozen at all times. Travel by ship is extremely dangerous. Huge sheets of ice float through the frigid waters, threatening to crush the vessels that appear in their paths.

Did You Know?

In the letters, which set the stage for the novel, Robert Walton says he has been deeply affected by the narrative poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a leading poet of the Romantic era. In the poem, an old sailor, or mariner, tells the story of a horrific sea voyage that changed his life. Sailing in stormy seas near the South Pole, the mariner's ship is surrounded by ice. When the crewmen spot an albatross, a huge seagull-like bird, flying through the fog, the ice splits open, freeing the ship. Then, unexpectedly, the mariner shoots the albatross. After this act of cruelty, the ship is cursed. Driven north, it becomes stranded in a hot, windless sea. All of the crew except the mariner die. Ever since, the remorseful mariner has traveled the world to tell his story and to teach others to revere God's creatures.

Walton's comments about "The Ancient Mariner" are examples of allusion. An **allusion** is a reference in a written work to something from history, art, religion, myth, or another work of literature. Writers use allusions to give readers additional insights about what is happening in the story and why. Shelley makes frequent use of literary allusions in *Frankenstein*.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

ardent [ärd'ənt] *adj.* passionate

countenance [koun'tə nəns] *n.* face; expression

dauntless [dônt'lis] *adj.* fearless

harrowing [har'ō ing] *adj.* extremely distressing

irrevocably [i rev'ə kə blē] *adv.* in a way impossible to change

mariner [mar'ə nər] *n.* navigator of a ship

perseverance [pur'sə vēr'əns] *n.* steady persistence

Active Reading

***Frankenstein* Letters 1–4**

Robert Walton and the stranger he rescues share a number of similarities. As you read Walton’s letters, make notes in the chart below about each character’s situation, goals, attitude, and personal qualities. Consider both the character’s statements and his actions. When you complete the chart, take time to think about the things the men have in common.

	Walton	The stranger
Situation	is searching for the source of magnetism in the polar regions	
Goals		
Attitude		
Personal Qualities		

Responding

Frankenstein Letters 1-4

Personal Response

How did you react to the two characters introduced in this section? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Who is Robert Walton? What is he searching for? What is his attitude toward his quest? What do these details suggest to you about his character?

2. In this letter to his sister, what does Walton say he longs for? Why do you think Walton feels lonely even though he is on board a ship with a full crew?

3. How does Walton respond to the stranger? Why do you think Walton is attracted to the stranger?

Responding

Frankenstein Letters 1–4

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Why is the poem *The Ancient Mariner* important to Walton? How is the stranger similar to the ancient mariner? What mood does Shelley create by alluding to this poem?

5. Walton has a thirst for knowledge, as the stranger once did. What details suggest that both are willing to make sacrifices in the search for knowledge? Do they seem unusual in this respect? Refer to your discussion in the **Focus Activity** on page 12.

Literature and Writing

A Good Beginning?

Urged by her husband, Percy Shelley, to expand her ghost story into a novel, Mary Shelley added Walton's letters as a frame to Frankenstein's tale. Do you believe the letters are an effective device for drawing readers into the story. What did you learn about explorers through Walton's letters? What did you learn about the stranger? Why do you think Shelley chose to lead into the stranger's story by starting with a frame story about Robert Walton? On a separate sheet of paper write your analysis of the letters as a frame for the novel.

Extending Your Response

Listening and Speaking

In a small group, take turns reading aloud the three letters contained in Letter IV. In these letters, Walton describes how he rescued the stranger. Assign one letter to each reader. To prepare for your reading, you may want to use an enlarged photocopy for easier reading and marking. Practice reading the letter, underlining the most important sentences and making marginal notes about the emotions the character is expressing, if you have a copy to work with. Circle any difficult words and check their pronunciation in a dictionary. When you read, adjust your rate of speaking, volume, and pitch to convey the feelings and attitude of the characters. After the reading, discuss any new insights you gained into Walton's character or the events he described.

Learning for Life

While many people use E-mail, especially in business, letter-writing remains an important skill. E-mail is a good choice for short, to-the-point messages, but a letter may be a better choice if you want to explain something at length. A letter is also a good way to share and reflect on your experiences with people you know well. Following Walton's example in the novel, write a letter to a friend or relative. In your letter, describe one or more recent personal experiences in detail and reflect on the meaning of those experiences.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Frankenstein Chapters 1–10

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How do you define personal responsibility? When something bad happens that involves you, how do you know whether or not you bear some responsibility for it?

Discuss

Evaluate these situations. In each case, discuss whether person *B* has a responsibility to person *A*.

- *A* falls off *B*'s roof while mending it.
- *B* walks by *A*, who is homeless and begging on the street.
- *B* lends *A* his car, which has faulty brakes, and *A* has an accident.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Victor Frankenstein deals with his sense of personal responsibility.

BACKGROUND

Two Well-Rounded Characters

In Chapters 1 through 10, Shelley develops the two main characters in the novel: Victor Frankenstein and his creature. She also introduces a number of minor characters. Both Frankenstein and the creature have complex and multifaceted personalities. In this regard, they stand out from the other characters in the novel. When a fictional character has individuality and depth, and experiences personal growth or change, he or she is called a **round character**. The opposite of a round character is a **flat character**. Round characters are life-like and three-dimensional, while flat characters seem more like cardboard figures or stereotypes, and are not as well developed.

Did You Know?

Victor Frankenstein develops an interest in science after reading about the “wild fancies” of several noted alchemists who lived 300 to 500 years before his lifetime. Alchemy was a field of philosophy that speculated about natural processes and often involved chemical experiments. Medieval alchemists believed they could find substances that would enable them to transform ordinary metals, such as lead, into gold or create a magical drink that would extend life and youth forever. While alchemy is not true science, the alchemists did make some scientific contributions. They discovered mineral acids and alcohol. They also invented types of laboratory equipment and procedures, which were later modified and used by scientists.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

benevolent [bə nev' ə lənt] *adj.* showing charity

commiserate [kə miz' ə rāt'] *v.* to express sympathy

consolation [kən sə lā' shən] *n.* something that eases sorrow or disappointment

discern [di surn'] *v.* to detect; to perceive

fiend [fēnd] *n.* evil spirit; devil

hideous [hid' ē əs] *adj.* extremely ugly

omen [ō' mən] *n.* a sign of future good or evil

Active Reading

Frankenstein Chapters 1–10

In Chapters 1 through 10, the author introduces the two major characters in the novel as well as several minor characters. In the chart below, list each character and note important details about his or her background or personality.

Character	Important Details
Victor Frankenstein	from happy home; thirsty for knowledge; ambitious; hard-working

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 1–10

Personal Response

What do you think of Victor Frankenstein as a student and scientist? What do you admire or dislike about his goals? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Who is Elizabeth and how does Frankenstein feel about her? What does their relationship tell you about Frankenstein’s values and personality?

2. What is Frankenstein’s purpose in pursuing science? What does he study? How do you interpret Frankenstein’s initial response to the success of his experiment?

3. Frankenstein says, “I shunned my fellow creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime.” From your reading, give specific examples of Frankenstein’s isolation from others. What does this tell you about his personality? Explain.

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 1–10

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How is Frankenstein affected by the knowledge that the creature may be responsible for the death of William? In Chapter 7, what statement suggests that he views the creature as part of himself? Do you agree with Frankenstein that he bears some responsibility for the death? Why?

5. How does the creature explain his evil behavior? Why does the creature compare himself to the biblical character Adam? Do you think this comparison is accurate? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Thrills and Chills

Gothic novels emphasize horror, mystery, and the supernatural. Write an analysis of the gothic features of the novel *Frankenstein* that are evident in Chapters 1 through 10. How does Shelley establish an atmosphere of mystery? How does the action create a feeling of terror in the reader? What supernatural elements does she include? Consider setting, plot, and character in your analysis.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Evaluate the character of Victor Frankenstein using evidence from Chapters 1 through 10 of the novel. Focus your discussion on the following questions as well as others that occurred to you as you were reading.

- What can you infer about Frankenstein’s character from his close personal relationships? his scientific project? In your opinion, is he an appealing person?
- Do you think that Frankenstein went too far in his quest for knowledge? Did he have a good motive for his project? Did he have adequate knowledge to begin his project? Did he consider possible consequences of his actions?
- How is Frankenstein affected by what happens after he abandons the creature? Why does he call himself the “true murderer” of William?

Art Connection

Illustrate a scene from Chapters 1 through 10 that includes both Frankenstein and his creature. Before you begin, reread the related passages of the novel to gather details provided by the author. Remember that the familiar image of the creature from films is just one interpretation of his appearance. Use the evidence in the novel and your imagination to create your own visual interpretation of the creature.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Frankenstein Chapters 11–16

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What are some reasons why a person might be rejected by others?

Quickwrite

Describe on paper a situation in which a person might feel he or she has been repeatedly rejected by others. What emotional response might the person have?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what the creature did after he left Frankenstein's workshop.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

There are many definitions of tragedy. In literature, a **tragedy** is a story that ends in the downfall of its main character and arouses pity or fear in the reader. In general, tragedy also expresses a tragic view of life—the idea that a noble person inevitably brings on his or her suffering or death through some failure or error. As you continue to read *Frankenstein*, think about whether the novel fits this definition of a tragedy.

A Fallen Angel

Do these words sound familiar? “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mold me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?” This quotation appears on the title page of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It could have been spoken by Frankenstein's creature. In fact, the words come from John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) and are spoken by the character of Adam. This book-length poem is a retelling of the story of Adam and Eve from the Bible. An equally prominent character in the poem is Satan, the lord of evil. Milton depicts Satan as the chief angel of heaven who rebels against God and is cast into hell. To avenge himself, he tempts Adam and Eve to disobey God in the Garden of Eden.

Near the end of Chapter 10 of *Frankenstein*, the creature confronts his creator. He compares himself not only to Adam but to “the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.” In Chapters 11 through 16, Shelley expands on this allusion to *Paradise Lost*, emphasizing the parallels between God and Satan in the poem, and Frankenstein and his creature in the novel.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

conjecture [kən jek 'chər] *v.* to guess using the available evidence

disconsolate [dis kon 'sə lit] *adj.* unable to be cheered up

enigmatic [en 'ig mat 'ik] *adj.* puzzling

flagrant [flā 'grənt] *adj.* highly offensive

pensive [pen 'siv] *adj.* deeply or dreamily thoughtful

venerable [ven 'ər ə bəl] *adj.* worthy of respect or reverence

vengeance [ven 'jəns] *n.* punishment inflicted in return for a wrong

wantonly [wont 'ən lē] *adv.* maliciously; without restraint

Active Reading

***Frankenstein* Chapters 11–16**

In this section, the creature recounts what has happened in his life since Frankenstein abandoned him. Use the chart below to record the main experiences in the creature’s life as well as his thoughts and feelings about those experiences.

Experiences	Thoughts and Feelings
<p><i>discovers his senses; finds fire and food; observes moon</i></p>	<p><i>feels joy in discovering nature</i></p>

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 11–16

Personal Response

What questions would you like to ask the creature?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does the creature get to know the family who lives in the cottage? Why is he drawn to the family? How does the family's reaction to the creature affect his view of himself and the human race?

2. After reading *Paradise Lost*, why does the creature think he is like Adam in that book? Why does he think he is like Satan? What are the specific reasons that the creature gives for hating his creator?

3. How does the creature cause the deaths of William and Justine? What does the murder of William tell the creature about himself? According to the creature, what can save him from doing evil?

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 11–16

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Thus far, do you find the creature more or less sympathetic than the character of Victor Frankenstein? Explain.

5. How believable is the account of the creature's education? Refer to the novel and your own experience in your answer.

Literature and Writing

Friend or Fiend?

Analyze the creature's personality. In your written analysis, discuss the different aspects of his character by addressing questions such as these:

- In what ways is he like any human being? In what ways is he different?
- What does he want most in life? Why does his goal seem unattainable?
- How have the creature's experiences shaped his opinion of himself? Does he have the potential for good as well as evil? To whom does he compare himself and why?

Support your analysis by citing events from the story as well as quoting statements made by the creature.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Now that you have heard the creature's story, do you think he is justified in declaring an "ever-lasting war" against the human species and his creator? Debate this question in your group. As you do, consider the following questions:

- What have the creature's interactions with humans been like? What acts of revenge does the creature take? Are these acts justified? Is revenge ever justified? Before answering, consider the quickwrite you did for the **Focus Activity** on page 20.
- How has the creature grown intellectually and emotionally since his "birth"? How does he justify his actions?
- Does the creature bear responsibility for the suffering he causes, or is Frankenstein ultimately responsible?

Learning for Life

Many companies and organizations have policies to help them evaluate job candidates. These policies help to ensure that hiring decisions are made on the basis of relevant facts, not on prejudices and preconceptions. Imagine you are an employer. Everyday you see job applicants who vary widely in their appearance. Come up with a list of guidelines for job interviewers that will ensure that diverse candidates are evaluated fairly.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Frankenstein Chapters 17–21

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Why is it important to love and be loved?

Think-Pair-Share

On a sheet of paper, write three reasons why companionship or love is an important part of the human experience. Then meet with another student and read your ideas aloud. Discuss, blend, and adjust your lists to come up with three reasons that you both agree on.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the need for love continues to motivate Frankenstein's creature.

BACKGROUND

The British Isles

The British Isles include two main islands, Great Britain and Ireland, as well as numerous smaller islands. They lie a relatively short distance off the coast of Europe and were once connected to the continent. Four groups of people call the islands home, the English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish. While the climate is uniformly maritime, consisting of mild winters, cool summers, and ample precipitation, the landforms vary from the mountains and rocky headlands of Scotland to the plains of Southeast England.

Did You Know?

Tales of horror create suspense by raising questions or uncertainties about the action in the reader's mind. Sometimes we don't know what will happen. As we read, we wonder *who* or *what* is responsible for the events that take place, or we wonder *how* the events came about. In other cases, the tragic outcome is known or strongly hinted at at the beginning of the story. As we read, the suspense comes from anticipating *when* the worst will occur or wondering if it can be prevented. Authors often increase the readers' feeling of fear or dread through **foreshadowing**. They give hints that suggest or prepare the reader for a later event. Such hints, or foreshadowing, might take the form of a statement by a character, a mood established in the description of the setting, or the revelation of an important trait in one of the characters.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

base [bās] *adj.* mean-spirited

inexorable [i nek' sər ə bəl] *adj.* unyielding

insurmountable [in' sər moun' tə bəl] *adj.* impossible to overcome

irksome [urk' səm] *adj.* annoying

listless [list' lis] *adj.* lacking energy

malicious [mə lish' əs] *adj.* deliberately harmful

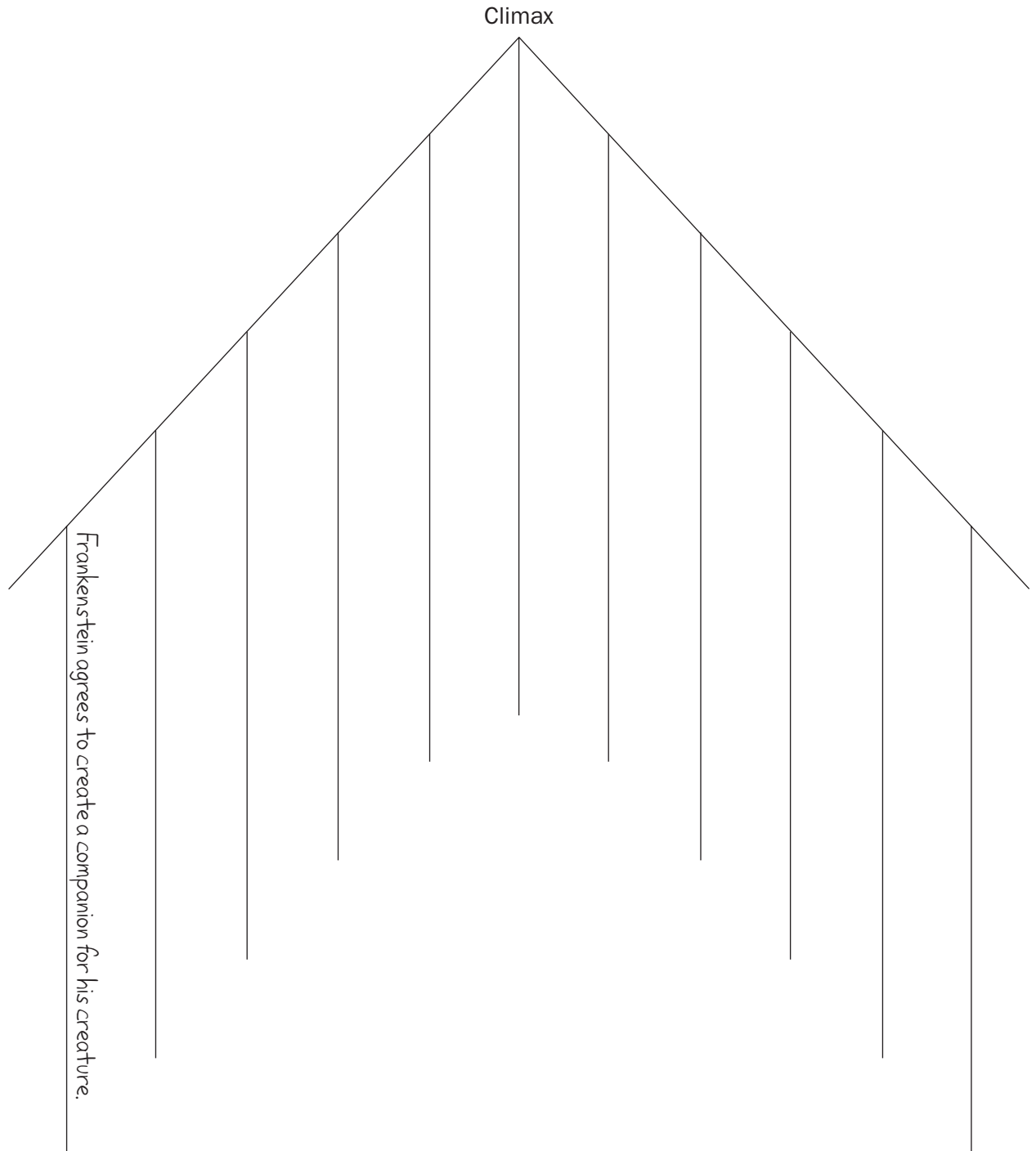
torpor [tôr' pər] *n.* state of inactivity or apathy

traverse [trav' ərs] *v.* to travel across

Active Reading

Frankenstein Chapters 17–21

Use the sequence chart below to trace the main events that occur after Frankenstein agrees to create a companion for his creature. Use as many boxes as you need but record the climax, or turning point, of this part of the novel at the peak of the diagram.



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Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 17–21

Personal Response

Which of the events in this section of the novel surprised you the most and why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What arguments does the creature use to persuade Frankenstein to make the female creature? How does Frankenstein's decision affect Frankenstein's mood and personal life?

2. What keeps Frankenstein from completing the second creature? In your opinion, why does the creature direct his revenge to Frankenstein's wedding?

3. How does Frankenstein become lost at sea? What happens when he lands in Ireland? Why does he call himself Henry Clerval's murderer?

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 17–21

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How does Shelley create a feeling of suspense in Chapters 17 through 21?

5. Did you find the events in Chapter 21 probable or improbable? Explain.

Literature and Writing

The Second Time Around

Imagine that Victor Frankenstein has decided to write a letter to Elizabeth or his father that describes his thoughts about creating another creature. Take on the role of Frankenstein as you write a letter of explanation. You may want to compare Frankenstein's creation of the second creature to his creation of the first one. Does he have the same motives or different ones? Do you think his attitude toward such ambitious projects has changed?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In your group, develop a soundtrack for this section of the novel. Make a list of specific songs or types of music you might play for each of the major scenes, such as the creature's visit to Frankenstein's room or Frankenstein's debate with himself at the side of the female creature. Review Chapters 17 through 21 to make a list of key scenes. Then skim for details about the physical setting or the characters' emotions that might spark ideas for music. Make a two-column outline of your soundtrack. In the first column list the key scenes or events in order. In the second column identify or describe the music that will accompany the scene. Focus on conveying the mood of the scene. If possible, play your music for the rest of the class or explain your choices.

Math Connection

Chart Victor Frankenstein's path on a map of Europe as he travels from Geneva to London and then to other cities and locations farther north. Then use the scale on the map to estimate the mileage between each pair of locations in sequence. To do this, you will need to consult the novel or make a guess about the form of transportation and route used. Record and label your figures clearly on a separate sheet of paper. Add up the mileage to find the total distance he traveled from the beginning of Chapter 17 to the end of Chapter 21. Compare your figures with those obtained by other students. If some figures disagree sharply, discuss the method you used to arrive at your figure. Decide which figure is most accurate.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Frankenstein Chapters 22–24

FOCUS ACTIVITY

It is sometimes said that the key to living a responsible and happy life is to balance intellectual and emotional pursuits. What does this mean to you?

Freewrite

Freewrite for five minutes about a person who is governed more by intellectual decisions than by emotional decisions. What are the positive and negative consequences of relying more on your intellect than your emotions?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find how Frankenstein weighs emotional and intellectual factors in a decision he must make.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Five years after *Frankenstein* was published, Mary Shelley saw the first dramatic production of her novel. She liked the actor's portrayal of her creature. How well she might like the hundreds of interpretations since is interesting speculation. In the 1931 film *Frankenstein*, starring English actor Boris Karloff, the monster comes to life on an operating table after being zapped with electricity. Given a huge, squared-off skull and pale corpse-like skin, Karloff portrayed the monster as a gentle, almost childlike character. His interpretation struck a chord with audiences, especially young children, from whom he received much fan mail. In the 1995 film version of the novel, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Robert De Niro, an actor known for his violent tough-guy roles, was cast as the creature. The director, Kenneth Branagh, explained, "I wanted a wise and intelligent and multifaceted Creature who could be angry and even funny at times, and who would have a sense of humor, however darkly ironic." To develop the physical appearance of the creature, make-up artists did research in books from the early 1800s on surgery, skin disorders, and embalming. They wanted to find out what Frankenstein would have been able to achieve using the techniques and knowledge available at the time. The result is a gray, scarred, hulking, patchwork sort of man.

Two Characters in One?

Many people who have not read Shelley's novel think that Frankenstein is the name of the creature, not the scientist who brought him to life. Careful readers of the novel, however, point out that this mistake has a certain symbolic truth. They see the two characters as doubles of each other, or two parts of a divided self. The idea of the double comes from German folklore and is known as the *doppelgänger* ("double goer"). The concept was based on the ancient belief that each living creature has an exact double who exists as a spirit or ghost. Many writers of horror stories have employed the idea of the double. For example, in Robert Louis Stevenson's novella of double identity, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a respectable doctor becomes a murderous stalker by night.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

adversary [ad'vər ser'ē] *n.* enemy; opponent

consternation [kon'stər nā'shən] *n.* state of confusion

illustrious [i lus'trē əs] *adj.* very distinguished

omnipotent [om nip'ət tənt] *adj.* all-powerful

pilgrimage [pil'grə mij] *n.* long journey for a spiritual purpose

Active Reading

Frankenstein Chapters 22–24

In the final chapters of the novel, Victor Frankenstein and his creature are involved in a mad contest of revenge. In the chart below, record at least four statements made by each character that reveal his motives, feelings, or state of mind. Note the chapter number after each statement.

Frankenstein

<p><i>"Human beings, their feelings and passions, would indeed be degraded if such a wretch as I felt pride." (Chapter 22)</i></p>

The creature

<p><i>"A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse." (Chapter 24)</i></p>

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 22–24

Personal Response

Did the ending of the novel surprise you? Can you imagine a different ending to the novel? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What does Frankenstein promise to tell Elizabeth after they are married? How does he behave in the weeks leading up to their wedding? Why is Frankenstein especially agitated as evening approaches on their wedding day?

2. What happens to Elizabeth? What is ironic, or unexpected, about the creature's revenge on Frankenstein? What does Frankenstein resolve to do?

3. How does Shelley show that Frankenstein and the creature are both obsessed with revenge? Does either of them win? Explain.

Responding

Frankenstein Chapters 22–24

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How does Shelley return to her frame story in Chapter 24? What effect does she achieve by using this frame story?

5. How do you think Frankenstein failed or erred as a human being? What traits or attributes, do you think, led to the creature's fate?

Literature and Writing

Creating Dialogue

On board Walton's ship, the creature sees his creator for the last time. If they had had a chance to talk at this point, what might they say to each other at the end of their long chase? Write a dialogue that reveals each character's feelings about the other and about himself. You may wish to incorporate or paraphrase quotations from the novel. Make sure your dialogue accurately conveys the character's attitudes, feelings, and insights. After you have written your dialogue, ask two other students to read it aloud and offer comments.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In your group, come up with a personality profile, in the form of a word web, for each of the two main characters. Draw the webs on the chalkboard or on paper, putting the name of each character in the center and branching out from there.

Listening and Speaking

The **theme** of a work is the main idea, insight, or observation the writer offers. A work may have more than one theme, and even a single theme can be expressed in different ways. Furthermore, each reader will have his or her own ideas about a work's main themes. Meet with five or six other students. Cut a sheet of paper into equal-size strips, enough for the members of your group. On your strip, write a single sentence that, in your opinion, expresses one of the important themes of the novel. Put all the strips into a bag. Then take turns drawing them out one at a time (make sure you do not get your own). Read the theme statement aloud. Then, state whether you agree or disagree with the writer's choice and why. Lead a brief discussion of the theme in your group. Continue until each theme has been discussed.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Responding

Frankenstein

Personal Response

What is your reaction to the fate of Victor Frankenstein? to his creature? Explain.

What would you like to ask Shelley about her main characters' fate?

Writing About the Novel

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the novel? Did you find yourself engaged in the central conflict Shelley presents or the questions she raises? Do you believe that *Frankenstein* is a well-crafted work of literature? Write a short evaluation of the novel. State whether you would recommend the book to others.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

Roger Ebert

Before You Read

Focus Question

Think about a time when you had a mixed reaction to a movie or television show. What did you say when friends asked you whether or not you liked what you saw?

Background

One of the most celebrated movie critics in the United States, Roger Ebert has been reviewing films for the daily newspaper, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, since the late 1960s. In his review of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, he takes issue with the idea that a movie version of a novel must exactly follow its source.

Responding to the Reading

1. What does Ebert say the “true subject” of the *Frankenstein* tale is? What does he say the “real story” or “whole issue” of the film is?

2. What does Ebert like about the movie? What does he dislike? Overall, how does he feel about *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*?

3. **Making Connections** After reading this review, what similarities would you expect to find between the creature in this movie and the creature in the novel? What differences would you expect to find?

Art Connection

Make a poster advertising *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Include an attention-getting image from the movie along with an excerpt from Ebert's review and the names of the director and the main stars. Arrange the information and images in the way most likely to lure viewers to the theater.

A Frankenstein Monster Ended Up Being a Lamb

Ed Regis

Before You Read

Focus Question

What do you think it would be like to be a scientist involved in cutting-edge research on cloning?

Background

In this article, book reviewer Ed Regis gives an overview of a book about animal cloning research. Unlike Shelley, who gives the reader only hints about Frankenstein’s procedure in making his creature, Regis describes in detail the process the scientists used.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why were biologists interested in cloning a sheep?

2. What problems made it difficult for scientists to create the first clone?

3. **Making Connections** Based on this book review, what can you infer about Regis’s attitude toward cloning? Does he think animal cloning is an alarming development or something to celebrate? Do you think Mary Shelley would share his attitude? Explain.

Art Connection

Draw a cartoon for the editorial page of a newspaper to illustrate ideas and views on animal cloning. You may want to focus on the ideas expressed in the review, or you may want to focus on your own views. As you brainstorm ideas, consider the visual possibilities suggested by the title of the book review. Add labels, dialogue, or a caption, as needed, to clarify the message of the cartoon.

A New Life

Ramsey Campbell

Before You Read

Focus Question

Have you ever awakened from a deep sleep and not immediately recognized your surroundings? Can you remember your sensations?

Background

Mary Shelley's gothic masterpiece has cast a long shadow. Published more than 180 years ago, *Frankenstein* continues to inspire and influence other horror writers. Among them is British author Ramsey Campbell, who wrote this short mystery in 1976.

Responding to the Reading

1. What vague memories does the main character have as the story opens? How do you know he is afraid?

2. What is the main character's first guess about where he is and why? What terrifying discovery does he make?

3. What thought did the main character have as he was drowning? What does he think happened to him as a result?

4. **Making Connections** In what way is Campbell's story indebted to Shelley's *Frankenstein*? Consider the plot, the central characters, the mood, and setting.

Creative Writing

Mary Shelley's description of the creature's coming to life is very spare; few details are given. In addition, this event is described from Frankenstein's point of view. Rewrite the "birth" scene in *Frankenstein* from the creature's point of view. What does it feel like to suddenly become conscious of the world? What sounds and sights in your surroundings make an impression on you? What sensations and feelings, or possibly memories, are you aware of?

The Golem

Isaac Bashevis Singer

Before You Read

Focus Question

What is your favorite folktale and why? Why do you think certain folktales have been passed on from generation to generation?

Background

Isaac Bashevis Singer, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, is known for his stories about Jewish life in Poland and the United States. In *The Golem*, Singer retells a European legend about a giant artificial man who, like Frankenstein's creature, is physically powerful.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why is life difficult for the Jews of Prague? Why is Rabbi Leib told to make a golem?

2. How does Rabbi Leib create the golem and bring him to life? How does the rabbi feel about his power to create the golem?

3. How does the golem begin to change? Why is he unhappy? How does he express his unhappiness?

4. **Making Connections** Compare the rabbi's attitude toward the golem with Frankenstein's attitude toward his creature. Compare the golem's search for love with the creature's search.

Speaking and Listening

Folktales were originally passed on by word of mouth, with members of an older generation often telling the stories to members of a younger one. Adapt the story of the golem of Prague for a younger audience. Practice telling the story out loud, using your voice and gestures to keep your listeners' attention. Then tell the story to your class or to an audience of younger students.

... That Thou Art Mindful of Him

Isaac Asimov

Before You Read

Focus Question

Do you think scientists should have complete freedom in their research, or should society and government control research?

Background

In this science fiction story set far in the future, a research-based company manufactures highly intelligent robots. In order to make sure the robots help the human race instead of threatening it, the inventors have devised a set of “Laws of Robotics.”

Responding to the Reading

1. What is the “Frankenstein Complex”? Do you think the Frankenstein Complex affects society today? How?

2. What are Harriman’s goals in developing the robo-bird? Do you believe he might be successful in his scheme for overcoming the fear of robots? Explain.

3. **Making Connections** If Victor Frankenstein had been satisfied with his superhuman creatures and began producing them in numbers, do you think society would have passed laws to control them? Based on what you know about the creature and what you have learned about the Laws of Robotics, what laws do you think would enable the creatures to coexist with human beings?

Learning for Life

Imagine that company officials are discovered taking the robot off company property. Write a newspaper editorial denouncing the company’s action and point out the dangers to society. Make references to Frankenstein’s experiences with his creature.

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