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Study Guide

for

Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley



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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
discovers his senses; finds fire and food; observes moon	feels joy in discovering nature

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

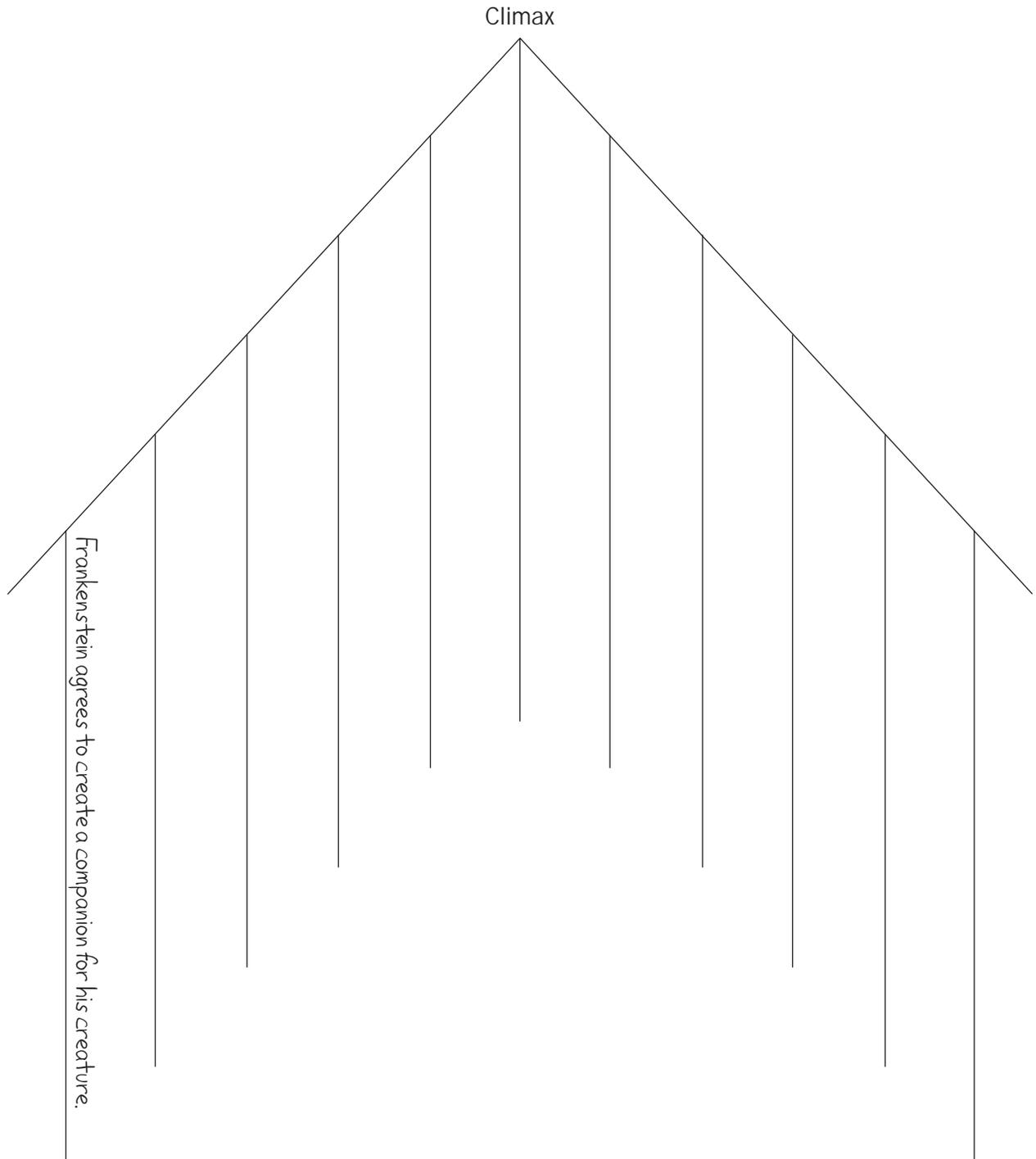
torpor [tôr' pər] *n.* state of inactivity or apathy

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.