

# Frankenstein

## Study Guide

# Volume I

## Letters

## Vocabulary

ardent

emaciated

wretched

paroxysms

1. The novel begins with a series of letters in which the narrator of the novel is writing his thoughts and plans to his sister. Where is the narrator going? Why has he chosen to make this voyage? Of what does the narrator dream? What is his goal?
2. Walton says he is a “Romantic.” What is a Romantic person like?
3. What evidence does Walton provide of his Romantic leanings?
4. Aside from personal glory, what two benefits to mankind does Walton hope to achieve?

5. Identify one example of foreshadowing.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How do Walton's letters illustrate the tension between eighteenth-century rationalism and nineteenth-century Romanticism?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is Walton's impression of Frankenstein?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does Frankenstein react to Walton's dream/goal?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why does Frankenstein decide to tell Walton his story?

## **Chapters 1 & 2**

### **Vocabulary**

|           |           |           |            |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| imperious | interment | posterity | sustenance |
| caprice   | oblivion  | cursory   | odious     |
| rankling  |           |           |            |

1. What plot exposition does Shelley offer the reader in these chapters?
2. What are Frankenstein's parents like? How do they feel about each other and about their child?
3. How are Victor and Elizabeth different? What kind of person is Victor?
4. What quality in young Frankenstein proves to be his tragic flaw later in life?

5. Who is Henry Clerval? What is he like? How is he different from Victor?
6. What does Victor want to accomplish in life? Why does he turn to the study of mathematics? What prevents him from continuing his study?
7. How is Elizabeth a “typical” Romantic female character?
8. How did Cornelius Agrippa and other early scientists affect young Victor?
9. How does Victor view his switch to mathematics? What does he compare it to?

10. What is foreshadowed at the end of Chapter 2?

### **Chapters 3 & 4**

1. How is the story of Victor's mother's death ironic?
2. What does Victor contemplate in the first hours of his departure? How do these thoughts indicate his future?
3. Why does Victor not want to study the contemporary scientists suggested by M. Krempe?
4. What ultimately changes Victor's mind about new chemists?

5. Compare the physiognomy of Krempe and Waldman.
6. What is the literary term for M. Waldman and the effect that his lecture and guidance have on Victor?
7. Why does Victor favor science above all other disciplines?
8. How is Victor's practice of science different from the modern practice of science?
9. Why does Victor hesitate to make a creature like man? Why does he go through with it?

10. What traditional tragic flaw is Victor demonstrating?
11. What is the central flaw in Victor's decision what to create?
12. What internal conflict does Victor deal with as he finishes his creation?
13. List some gothic details from the end of Chapter 4.
14. What is Romantic in the moral Victor shares with Walton?

## Chapters 5 & 6

## Vocabulary

carnage

salubrious

1. How is the night that the creature is born an example of Gothic prose?
2. What is ironic about the creature's physical appearance?
3. What is Romantic about the creature's physical appearance?
4. How does Dr. Frankenstein feel about his creation? What does he do after the creature comes to life?
5. What event is foreshadowed in the beginning of Chapter V?



6. What does Frankenstein feel when the creature reaches out to him? What do you think is the creature's reason for reaching out for Dr. Frankenstein?
7. What is most likely the cause of Victor's reaction to his success?
8. In Elizabeth's letter to Victor there is one example of Shelley's support for the revolution in France and republican society. Identify the passage.
9. What do you learn about in Elizabeth's letter through plot exposition?
10. What sparks Victor's fever?

11. How is Victor's recovery an example of Romanticism?
12. How does Shelley create suspense toward the end of these chapters?

## **Chapters 7 & 8**

### **Vocabulary**

perdition                      languid                      obdurate                      wantonly  
ignominious

1. What function do letters serve in this and previous chapters?
2. What briefly lifts Victor's spirit on his journey home? Why is this significant?
3. Why does Elizabeth believe that she is responsible for William's death?

4. What is “gothic” about Frankenstein’s encounter with the creature?
5. What is depicted in the picture above the Frankensteins’ mantelpiece?
6. Why doesn’t Frankenstein take the blame from Justine?
7. Why does Elizabeth’s speech in court hurt Justine?
8. What is revealed about Justine’s character in these chapters?

9. Do you think Frankenstein is as guilty as he feels he is? Of what do you think he is guilty, if anything?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How do the reactions of Victor and his family to William's murder illustrate Romantic principles?

## **Volume II**

### **Chapters 1 & 2**

#### **Vocabulary**

diabolical                      satiated                      augmented                      precipitous

1. What keeps Victor from killing himself at the beginning of this chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does Victor become a disenfranchised member of society himself?

3. As Victor climbs the mountains, what effect do they have on him?
4. Why does Victor climb Montanvert in spite of the rain? How does that identify this as a romantic novel?
5. What are Victor's feelings as his creature approaches him. What is the first thing he says to his creature?
6. How does the creature respond to Victor?
7. What biblical character does the creature compare himself to? What character does he think he ought to be?

8. What do you think the creature will ask of Victor? Why?
9. What does the creature say made him a “fiend?” What is Romantic about this?
10. What does the creature claim is the basis of Victor’s debt to him?
11. What does the creature promise to Victor if Victor will fulfill his duties as creator?

### **Chapters 3 & 4**

#### **Vocabulary**

slaked                      purloined                      debilitated

1. What technique does Shelley employ to provide the reader with the creature’s story?

2. Trace the levels of narration Shelley has established to tell this story.
3. How does the creature describe his first days of life?
4. How does the creature respond to fire?
5. How are the creature's early days different from Victor's early days?
6. What effect does the creature's speech (vocabulary and grammar) have on the reader? Why did Shelley write it for that purpose?

7. Why is the creature confused to see his cottagers crying?
8. Why does the creature work so hard to learn their language? What does that reveal about his character?
9. What does the creature say he discovers about himself? What feelings does this discovery cause?
10. Why is the creature's appearance relevant? What "science" is Shelley discrediting?
11. What evidence does Shelley provide of the creature's innate goodness?



12. What is typically Romantic in the final paragraph of Chapter 3?
13. How are the creature's first words similar to the typical first words of human babies?
14. Based on what you've read so far, do you anticipate the cottagers will accept the creature? Why or why not?
15. Why does Shelley end chapter 4 on an apparently optimistic note?

### **Chapters 5 & 6**

1. Explain the second sentence of this chapter: "I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which...have made me what I am."

2. What practical purpose does the beautiful stranger serve?
3. Why does the creature call the cottagers his “protectors?”
4. What paradox does the creature see in humankind through his study of human history?
5. In what way does his study of human society make him what he eventually becomes?
6. What is the primary disadvantage of the creature’s “education”?

7. In view of the trial of Safie's father in Chapter 6, and Justine's trial earlier, what is Shelley's opinion of the courts in that era?
8. How is Safie a feminist character?
9. What plot exposition is revealed in Chapter 6?
10. What is the character of Safie's father? How is he a foil to Safie, and to Victor's own father?

## **Chapters 7 & 8**

### **Vocabulary**

epithets

1. What is revealed about the creature's character very early in Chapter 7?

2. How does the creature feel about the *Sorrows of Werter*? In what ways is he different from the characters in the book?
3. What is the creature's reaction to *Paradise Lost*? According to the creature, how is he both similar to and dissimilar from Adam?
4. Why couldn't the creature fully sympathize with the characters in Milton's book?
5. What does the creature find in his pocket? How does it make him feel?
6. What happens when the creature introduces himself to the cottagers?

7. Why doesn't the creature kill itself after this incident?
8. What evidence is there that the creature is still essentially good despite this momentous disappointment?
9. What does the creature decide to do? What is his new plan?
10. What happens that makes the creature finally despair?
11. Why does the creature decide to go to Geneva? How have these horrible circumstances changed him?

12. Why does the creature ask for a mate?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Vocabulary**

detrimental

1. What, according to the creature, is the cause of his wickedness and what will be the remedy?
2. What does Victor suggest is a creator's obligation to his creation?
3. Follow Victor's and the creature's lines of reasoning in their debate over the creation of the companion. Whose reasoning is most sound?
4. Why does Victor refuse to make a female monster? Do you feel he is justified in his refusal?

5. What is the “sympathy” that the creature long for?

### **Volume 3**

### **Chapters 1, 2 & 3**

### **Vocabulary**

|           |           |          |          |
|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| appalling | indolence | sophisms | calamity |
| reveries  | penury    |          |          |

1. What is different about his solitude at the beginning of Chapter 1 from his solitude while first creating the monster?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does Victor’s father think is the cause of Victor’s present anxiety?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What are some of the reasons Victor feels he must go to England to complete his task?

4. Describe Victor's feelings as he journeys through England.
5. What does Victor say about his childhood in Chapter 2?
6. What is Victor's big fear in delaying his trip?
7. Why would the Romantic Mary Shelley call the English Civil War "the most animating epoch of English history"?
8. What style of literature describes the place where Victor begins to work in Scotland? Why?



9. How is his creation of this monster different from the first?
10. Give four reasons why Victor changes his mind about making the second creature. Use evidence from the book to refute each of Victor's reasons.
11. What opinion does Victor have of his creation? Do you agree with his assessment of it?
12. What is your reaction to the creature's speech? Do you agree with him at all? Do you think Victor has treated him fairly?
13. What does the creature threaten when Victor destroys the mate?

14. What is the “calmness” Victor finds after the monster storms away?

### **Chapters 4 & 5**

1. What is familiar about the method of the murder discovered in this chapter?
2. Who has been murdered, and why is Victor accused of the murder?
3. Why does Victor think he survived all that he had been through? How is the fact that he lives ironic?
4. Victor makes several references to his destiny in this chapter. What does he believe his destiny to be?

5. What does the word “torpor” mean in the following context?: “But my general state of being was a **torpor**, in which a prison was as welcome a residence as the divinest scene in nature”?
6. Why does Victor feel he can't be with people? What opinion does Victor express about his creation?
7. What is ironic about the desires of Victor and the creature?
8. Why does Victor decide to marry Elizabeth immediately?
9. In what way does Elizabeth restore the Romantic Victor?

10. What do you think will happen on Victor and Elizabeth's wedding night?
11. How does Shelley build suspense in these chapters?
12. What evidence is there to suggest what the creature really means by his threat to be with Frankenstein on his wedding night?

## **Chapters 6 & 7**

### **Vocabulary**

portend

1. When does it finally occur to Victor that he has foolishly misinterpreted the creature's threat?
2. How does the monster react to his murdering Elizabeth?

3. What does the word “acme” mean in the following context: “Mine has been a tale of horrors; I have reached their acme, and what I must now relate can but be tedious to you”?
4. What is different about Victor’s reaction to Elizabeth’s (and his father’s) death from the rest?
5. Victor, in his anger, says to the magistrate, “How ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom.” What is the irony in this?
6. In Chapter 6, Victor says his calmness is brought by despair. At the beginning of Chapter 7, he says his calculating revenge brings him calm. What does this change say about his character after the deaths of his wife and father?
7. What does the creature want Victor to do now? How does that show a difference in the creature’s character from the point when he wanted a companion?

8. Consider Victor's statement: "When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd or common projectors...All my speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained to eternal hell" How does this establish Victor as a tragic hero?
9. On his deathbed, Victor admits that he had an obligation to make sure his creature had a happy life. What is ironic about the excuse he offers for not doing so?
10. How does the end of the novel justify the concentric levels of narration introduced at the beginning?
11. How does the inclusion of Captain Walton affect the overall meaning of the book?
12. Explain how Victor is similar to a tragic hero.

14. How does Victor depart from the typical tragic hero?