Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley

eNotes: Table of Contents

Introduction

Mary Shelley made an anonymous but powerful debut into the world of literature when *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* was published in March, 1818. She was only nineteen when she began writing her story. She and her husband, poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, were visiting poet Lord Byron at Lake Geneva in Switzerland when Byron challenged each of his guests to write a ghost story. Settled around Byron's fireplace in June 1816, the intimate group of intellectuals had their imaginations and the stormy weather as the stimulus and inspiration for ghoulish visions. A few nights later Mary Shelley imagined the "hideous phantasm of man" who became the confused yet deeply sensitive creature in *Frankenstein*. She once said, "My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings." While many stage, television, and film adaptations of *Frankenstein* have simplified the complexity of the intellectual and emotional responses of Victor Frankenstein and his creature to their world, the novel still endures. Its lasting power can be seen in the range of reactions explored by various literary critics and over ninety dramatizations.

Although early critics greeted the novel with a combination of praise and disdain, readers were fascinated with and a bit horrified by the macabre aspects of the novel. Interestingly, the macabre has transformed into the possible as the world approaches the twenty-first century: the ethical implications of genetic engineering, and, more recently, the cloning of livestock, find echoes in Shelley's work. In addition to scientific interest, literary commentators have noted the influence of both Percy Shelley and William Godwin (Mary's father) in the novel. Many contemporary critics have focused their attention on the novel's biographical elements, tracing Shelley's maternal and authorial insecurities to her very unique creation myth. Ultimately, the novel resonates with philosophical and moral ramifications: themes of nurture versus nature, good versus evil, and ambition versus social responsibility dominate readers' attention and provoke thoughtful consideration of the most sensitive issues of our time.

Summary

Opening Letters
Frankenstein opens with Robert Walton's letter from St. Petersburgh, Russia, to his sister in England. He encourages her to share his enthusiasm about his journey to the North Pole to discover both the secret of magnetism and a passage through the pole. In additional letters he wavers between his solitude and alienation on the one hand, and his determined heart and resolved will on the other. His last letter tells the startling story of his having seen a being of gigantic stature shaped like a man, fleeing across the ice which is threatening to enclose the ship. The next day another sled appears, carrying the wasted and maddened Victor Frankenstein, who is pursuing the giant. Walton takes Frankenstein aboard. When he tells Frankenstein his purpose, how he hopes to make great discoveries, Frankenstein cautions him to leave off his mad pursuit. He asks him to listen to his story of how once he began in earnest to know all that could be known.

Victor's Story, Part I
Born in Naples, Italy, to a wealthy Swiss family, Victor Frankenstein is the only child of doting parents. When he is five, his mother brings home an orphaned girl named Elizabeth to be Victor's "sister." In Victor's happy childhood in Geneva, he and Elizabeth grow in their parents' love, and they are joined by more siblings. Victor develops a deep friendship with Henry Clerval, a fellow student. Where Clerval studies "the moral relations of things," Victor conceives a passion to discover the physical secrets of the world.

At seventeen, as he is to leave for the University at Ingolstadt, Elizabeth contracts scarlet fever. Nursed by Victor's mother, she recovers, but his mother dies. On her deathbed, she begs Elizabeth and Victor to wed. After some delay, Victor departs for Ingolstadt, where his chemistry professor so encourages him in the study of science that Victor determines to discover the secret of life, perhaps even how to create life itself. He pursues his studies in the chemistry lab and in dissecting rooms and morgues, gathering the material for his experiment to make a creature from discarded corpses, perhaps one "like himself." Cut off from contact with all others, ignoring letters from friends and family, he exhausts himself. Finally, on a dreary November night, Victor succeeds in animating a creature. Drained of all strength, he falls asleep, only to awaken from a nightmare to find the creature staring at him. He flees in horror at what he has done.

From the film *Frankenstein*, starring Boris Karloff, 1935.

The next day Clerval arrives and Victor's appearance and condition shock him. Victor can not tell Clerval what he has done. He believes he can keep his secret, for, on his return to his room, he discovers that the creature has fled. The nervous exhaustion into which Victor then falls lasts for several months, during which Clerval nurses him by taking him away from the lab and into the mountains on long walks.

Victor receives from his father a letter relating the death of Victor's younger brother William, strangled by someone while out walking. A necklace with a miniature likeness of Victor's mother was missing when the corpse was found. On his frantic return journey, in an electrical storm in the mountains near Geneva, Victor sees the monster and thinks that the monster might have killed William. At home Victor learns that everyone believes Justine, a family servant, to be guilty, for the necklace missing from the corpse was found on her. Victor exclaims that she is innocent, that he knows who the killer is, but does not speak up at her trial. Justine gives a forced confession and is convicted and hung. Overcome with remorse at the deaths of William and Justine, convinced of his own guilt, Victor seeks solitude. Elizabeth and his father attribute his behavior to his grief at his brother's death. He leaves the house to walk the Swiss Alps, journeying to the village of Chamounix. In a painful retreat amid the "solitary grandeur" of the mountains, he meets the monster crossing an ice field. To Victor's shocked expressions of outrage the monster replies calmly, asking Frankenstein to listen with compassion to his tale.

The Monster's Story
After fleeing from the laboratory on the night of his "birth," the monster discovers himself cold, unfed, and unbefriended in the mountains outside Ingolstadt, "a poor, helpless, miserable wretch. " He searches for food and shelter, which he finally finds in a hovel adjoined to a cottage. He observes the cottage's inhabitants an old man, a young man and woman. When he learns that the cottagers are not so happy as he believes they should be, he gathers firewood at night to replenish their woodpile and lessen their labors. Meanwhile, in the course of several seasons, he studies them, learns their names (Felix and Agatha and their father), and begins to study their language.

One day another woman arrives on horseback. Felix seems especially happy in her presence. The monster listens as Felix instructs her from a history book. He learns of human law and government, of rank and wealth, of human greatness and vileness. "Of what a strange nature is knowledge!" he exclaims. Above all, he learns of his own lonely deformity.

He later tells Frankenstein the story of this De Lacey family, a wealthy French family who suffered a reversal of fortunes, were imprisoned, and exiled to the poverty in which the monster finds them. From such books as John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost the monster learns more of human virtues and vices and of his own misery.

> And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist on a coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

One day when only the old man is in the cottage, the monster enters, introducing himself as a weary traveler. He discovers that because the old man is blind, he is not repulsed by him. The monster then tells his tale of misery and loneliness; the old man responds sympathetically. When the others return, horrified at his monstrous appearance, they chase him. From seclusion in the forest, the next night he emerges to burn down the cottage. He then flees toward Ingolstadt, determined on vengeance. He comes upon young William Frankenstein out walking. When the boy repulses the monster's friendly overtures, the monster kills him. He

takes from the boy a locket with the likeness of a woman and when he later meets another young woman asleep in a barn, he places the locket on her, certain that he can implicate her in the boy's murder. He concludes his tale by proposing to Victor that only Victor's creation of a female of similar deformity will grant him the happiness he cannot find among humans.

Victor's Story, Part II
The monster pleads with Victor to make him a mate, threatening him and his family if he does not. Frankenstein agrees, but only on condition that the creatures flee to uninhabitable parts of the earth where they will do no harm to humans. Victor returns to his family, more downhearted than ever. His father proposes that the long-hoped-for marriage of Victor and Elizabeth might restore Victor to happiness. Victor wishes instead to travel to England to discover from philosophers there something he believes might complete his work. He promises to marry Ehzabeth on his return. His father arranges to have Clerval meet him along the way in Strasbourg, France. They walk in the mountains, then travel by boat down the Rhine River and to England. In Edinburgh, Scotland, Victor asks Clerval to permit him to travel on alone for a time. Frankenstein, convinced that the monster has been following him, seeks solitude for his work on a remote island in the Scottish Orkneys. On a moonlit night his fears are realized when he looks up from his work on the new creature to discover the monster peering at him through the window. Victor then vows to destroy his new, half-finished creation. The monster threatens him: "I will be with you on your wedding night."

Frankenstein takes the remains of the new creature and dumps them into the sea from a boat he takes offshore. When he awakens hours later, he has drifted to Ireland. Several people on shore take him to a magistrate to answer for the death of a man found murdered the previous evening. The man, to Victor's horror, is Clerval. Imprisoned for several months, Frankenstein is freed after the magistrate discovers Victor's innocence. The magistrate sends for Victor's father in Geneva to bring him home. On his return he marries Elizabeth, worried all the while about the monster's threat, "I shall be with you on your wedding night." He interprets this to mean that the monster will kill him. On the wedding night, however, the monster breaks into their room and kills Elizabeth. After he sees the monster staring through the window, grinning, Victor vows to seek revenge. He pursues the monster across the Alps, across Europe, into Russia and north to the pole, where he finds himself stranded on an ice flow before he is taken aboard Walton's ship.

Closing Letters
One week after his last letter to his sister, during which Frankenstein relates his story, Walton writes again to say that Frankenstein still intends to pursue the creature until he dies. Walton, too, is still determined to pursue his quest, although mountains of ice surround the ship and threaten to lock it in place. When his sailors ask to turn back, Walton consents to turn south. His final letter to his sister recounts Frankenstein's death and his dying advice to Walton to forego ambition and seek tranquility instead. Walton's grief over his new friend's death is interrupted by the appearance of the monster in Frankenstein's cabin, grieving over the death of his creator. The monster tells Walton how his vengeance had never been joyful to him, how he was unjustly treated by the humanity which had created him. Thus, though born in innocence and goodness, he became malignant evil. He now lives in remorse, alone. After having said all this, he springs from the cabin window and disappears across the ice.

Overview

Background
Published in 1818, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* or, *The Modern Prometheus* added to the growing body of Romantic fiction published in the early 1800s. Shelley became one of the most influential writers of both Romantic and Gothic fiction, establishing, with *Frankenstein*, a new genre known today as science fiction.

Gothic romance often deals with mysterious and supernatural subjects. Gothic stories frequently take place in rugged, natural settings, near ancient castles or monasteries. The plots are suspenseful and usually deal with the forces of good and evil. One of the earliest works of Gothic fiction is Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764).

In his novel, Walpole challenged the realistic style of the time by writing about the past and the subconscious. His Gothic romance is one of the earliest examples of the emerging romantic movement. Novels such as Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Gregory Lewis's The Monk (1796), and William Godwin's Caleb Williams are other examples of the Gothic romance. American writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe also wrote in the Gothic style, which remained popular until the 1820s.

Romanticism was a separate intellectual and artistic movement that began in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century. Romantics, who promoted the uniqueness of individual imagination and expression, believed in the interrelation of nature, spirituality, and humankind. The movement, which began in Germany, soon became popular in England as well. The lyrical ballads of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are generally considered to be the beginning of English romanticism. Many other writers, including Lord Byron William Blake John Keats and Mary Shelley's husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, wrote in the romantic style. Other notable fiction writers of the time include Jane Austen whose Pride and Prejudice (1813) remains popular even today, and the poet Sir Walter Scott who wrote his first novel, *Waverly*, in 1814.

In addition to their philosophical and spiritual concerns, the Romantic writers were also affected by the political events of the time. Beginning in 1789, the French Revolution had created an upheaval in Europe. Social reorganization lasted for the next 10 years as the rebellion continued to change the social structure and government of France. While many of the Romanticists favored the original principles of the revolution, which effectively abolished the French monarchy in favor of a more democratic system controlled by the middle classes, they were opposed to the extreme violence that helped bring about the changes. At the same time, England was also experiencing a profound transformation. The Industrial Revolution had made England a leading economic force in the world as mechanical power helped boost the country's production in every area of industry and manufacture.

After the French Revolution France which had aided the rebellious British colonies during the American Revolution soon found itself engaged in a war with England. In 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned emperor of a revolutionary France still in flux. Within seven years, Napoleon had conquered all of Europe, from Spain to the Russian border with Prussia. The British, however, with the help of their powerful navy, remained unconquered. Then, in 1812, after Napoleon invaded Russia, a severe Russian winter cost France most of its army. A new European alliance, nurtured by British money and diplomacy, sprang up and France was defeated in Germany and Spain. Finally, in 1814, Napoleon surrendered and Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia drafted a peace treaty in Vienna. The following year, Napoleon returned from exile and raised a new army, but allied forces commanded by the British Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon during a three-day battle at Waterloo in June 1815.

Mary Shelley, who was experiencing turmoil in her own family, was raised during this time of political unrest and violence. Her relationship with Percy Shelley was scandalous at the time, but she gained acceptance at an early age with the publication of *Frankenstein*. The book was as controversial as her affair with Shelley. Sir Walter Scott, writing in *Blackwood's* magazine, praised the novel as an "extraordinary tale" and Shelley as an author with "uncommon powers of poetic imagination." *Edinburgh* magazine said Shelley demonstrated a "mastery in harsh and savage delineations of passion," adding, however, that "it is one of those works . . . which we do not well see why it should have been written." *The Quarterly Review* praised the "highly terrific" language of the novel, but said "our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing . . . it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manner, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated."

In spite of the mixed reviews it received, *Frankenstein* was a bestseller and would remain popular for generations. Mary Shelley became a respected author with numerous titles to her credit. It is the remarkable power of her first novel, though, that continues to inspire a host of horror stories and science fiction tales. Considering the book's lasting influence, it is hardly surprising that film adaptations of *Frankenstein* are still being made today.

List of Characters

Robert Walton—An explorer who meets and cares for Victor Frankenstein while traveling in the Arctic; Walton writes to his sister, Margaret Saville, in England, relating Victor's horrible tale.

The Creature—Victor Frankenstein's "monster".

Victor Frankenstein—A young man, born in Switzerland, whose study of science and natural philosophy leads to his tragic creation of the monster.

Alphonse Frankenstein—Victor's father; a wealthy, influential man with humanitarian concerns.

Beaufort—Alphonse Frankenstein's friend and Caroline's father.

Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein—Victor's mother and Alphonse's wife; she dies shortly before Victor leaves for Ingolstadt.

Elizabeth Lavenza—A young woman who is adopted by the Frankenstein family; she marries Victor and is killed by the creature.

Henry Clerval—Victor's best friend and closest confidant; he is also killed by the creature.

Ernest Frankenstein—Victor's younger brother.

William Frankenstein—Victor's youngest brother; William is murdered by Victor's creature.

Justine Moritz—A young woman who lives with the Frankenstein family; Justine is falsely accused of killing William. She is tried and executed for the murder.

M. Krempe—Victor's philosophy professor at the University of Ingolstadt.

M. Waldman—Another professor who becomes Victor's mentor at Ingolstadt.

Felix De Lacey—A young peasant the creature observes living in a small cottage in the forest.

Agatha De Lacey—Felix's sister, who also lives in the cottage.

M. De Lacey—Felix's and Agatha's father; the creature tries to make friends with him.

Safie—A young Turkish woman who is Felix's fiancée.

Safie's father—A Turkish man Felix helps escape from prison.

Mr. Kirwin—A judicial magistrate who is in charge of Victor's case in Ireland.

Daniel Nugent—A witness in the murder case in Ireland.

Nurse—A woman who cares for Victor in prison.

Magistrate—A criminal judge in Geneva who listens to Victor's story about the creature.

Summary of the Novel

Robert Walton, an explorer, describes his trip to the Arctic in letters to his sister, Margaret Saville, who lives in England. After discussing his preparations for the trip, one of Walton's letters informs Margaret that his ship is stuck and surrounded by ice. Walton then relates a strange event: As they looked out on the enormous ice field, Walton and his crew saw a gigantic man being pulled by a dogsled. The following day they discovered another, smaller man, desperately ill, adrift on a sheet of ice. Walton writes that he brought the man onto his ship, allowed him to rest, and attempted to nurse him back to health. After a week the man was able to talk and told Walton an incredible story.

The man's name is Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist born in Geneva, Switzerland. He is a member of a wealthy family concerned with humanitarian issues. Victor goes on to relate his story to Walton, who writes it down as Victor speaks, making a record of Victor's story, to be sent as a letter to Margaret Saville, Walton's sister.

Victor tells Walton that, as a boy, he was always fascinated by science and alchemy and he eventually attended the University of Ingolstadt to study natural science. At the university he focused all his attention on experiments designed to create life. After months of exhaustive study, Victor constructed a huge creature from parts of human cadavers. He then discovered a method of bringing it to life. However, when the creature opened its eyes, Victor was horrified by his monstrous-looking creation. He ran from his laboratory and became very ill and disoriented for almost two years. During this time, he believed that the creature must have perished.

After he recovered from his illness, as he prepared to return home to his family, Victor learned that William, his seven-year-old brother, had been murdered. Justine Moritz, a young woman the Frankenstein family had adopted, had been accused of the crime. But Victor refused to believe that Justine committed the murder. Instead, he suspected that his creature wasn't really dead, and was responsible for the horrible crime. However, after Victor returned to Geneva, Justine was tried, found guilty, and hanged.

Victor explains to Walton that he felt responsible for William's murder and Justine's execution. Guilt-ridden and desperate to be alone, he climbed into the mountains, where he encountered the creature. The creature told Victor that he had survived for the past two years, hiding out in the woods and eating nuts and berries. Lonely and miserable, he realized that he was repulsive to other human beings. In the forest, though, the creature discovered a gentle peasant family living in a cottage; by secretly observing them, the creature learned to read and write. Then, in his jacket pocket, the creature found Victor's journal and read of the experiments that led to his creation. Enraged, he concluded that it was Victor Frankenstein who was responsible for his misery.

After relating his story, the creature demanded that Victor re-create his experiment and construct another creature. The creature explained he was desperate for a companion who would not find him repulsive. If Victor does as he asks, he will go away with the new creature and never bother Victor again. Although wary of the proposal, Victor says he reluctantly agreed to the creature's request.

Victor tells Walton that he set up a new laboratory in Scotland and began the work of creating a companion for the creature. But he was haunted by the thought that this new monster might be more evil than the original, and he was terrified at the idea of the two creatures creating a new, horrible race of beings. So instead of completing his task, Victor destroyed his work before giving life to the new creation. But the original creature was watching Victor in his laboratory. Furious, he swore revenge, vowing to torment Victor for the rest of his life. Later that night the creature strangled Victor's best friend, Henry Clerval.

Several weeks later, Victor married Elizabeth Lavenza, a girl who was adopted by his family, and with whom Victor had always been in love. But after Victor and Elizabeth marry, the creature appeared on their wedding night and strangled Elizabeth to death. Grief-stricken over the death of Elizabeth, Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor's father, died a few months later. In utter despair, Victor vowed to pursue the creature and destroy it. He chased the monster for months, finally arriving in the Arctic where he met Walton and his expedition.

Having finished his story, Victor Frankenstein dies on Walton's ship. Walton ends the tale in additional letters to his sister, telling her that the night Victor died, the creature entered Victor's room and lamented his death. He then told Walton he planned to build a huge fire and burn himself to death. Before Walton could respond, the creature jumped from the ship and landed on a floating slab of ice. Walton concludes his final letter, telling Margaret that the creature was carried out to sea, where he disappeared into the darkness.

Estimated Reading Time
The Pennyroyal edition of Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus is 237 pages long with illustrations. While the novel is of average length, some of the language is dated and the sentences and paragraphs are rather long. The plot is complicated, and the narrative is unusual—related as a series of stories within stories and letters. It may be difficult for some readers to fully comprehend the entire text during a first reading. The average reader might want to divide his or her reading time into four or five sessions of two to three hours each, completing three to five chapters in each sitting.

Biography

Mary Shelley dedicated her first novel, Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus, to her father, William Godwin. Godwin, a respected writer himself, was the author of two well-known books, *Political Justice* (1793) and Caleb Williams (1794). Godwin's work contained controversial philosophical ideas and critiques of society. His belief in the inherent decency of human beings influenced a number of the Romantic poets of the time. In 1797, he married Mary Wollstonecraft, a distinguished writer whose *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1792. They had been married less than a year when Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to their daughter, Mary, who was born on August 30, 1797.

Mary Shelley
After Godwin remarried, Mary was raised by her stepmother, Mrs. Clairmont, a widow with two children of her own. Although Godwin had hoped to provide a stable family for his daughter, Mary had a difficult childhood, due in part to her contentious relationship with Clairmont. When Mary was 15, she moved into the home of the Baxters, who were friends of her father. It was at the Baxter's house, in May 1814, that she met

Percy Bysshe Shelley, a notable young poet who was there visiting Godwin. Although Percy was already married, he and Mary fell in love. In June, they left England together to travel through Europe. On February 22, 1815, Mary gave birth to a premature child, who died three weeks later. Another child, William, was born in January 1816.

Five months later, Percy and Mary traveled to Switzerland where they rented a cottage for the summer. Their neighbors included their friend, Lord Byron, who had a home near Geneva. During a rainy spell, when the evenings were cold and damp, Mary, Percy, and Byron would gather in front of Byron's fireplace and entertain each other by reading German ghost stories. Inspired by the tales, the three friends agreed to each write a story similar to ones they had been reading. Although Percy and Byron never completed theirs, Mary went on to write a story that would eventually become the novel *Frankenstein*. The eventful year concluded in tragedy after Shelley's wife, Harriet, committed suicide, drowning herself on December 10, 1816. Percy and Mary were legally married three weeks later. Another son, Percy Florence, was born shortly after the wedding.

Mary's novel, *Frankenstein*, was published in 1818 and its success brought Mary considerable recognition. Five months after it was published, a friend wrote from England that the book was "universally known and read." But this success would soon be overshadowed by tragedies in the author's life. Two of her three children became ill and died—Clara on September 24, 1818, and William on June 7, 1819. Then, three years later on July 8, 1822, Percy Shelley drowned with two companions when his boat was caught in a heavy squall on the Bay of Spezia in Italy.

In spite of the unhappiness in her life Mary Shelley continued to write. Her second novel, *Valperga*, was a success after it was published in 1823. (©2000-2004 eNotes) Other works include The Last Man (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck, A Romance* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). An account of her European travels in the 1840s was published in two volumes under the title *Rambles in Germany* (1844). She is also the author of two dramas, *Proserpine, A Mythological Drama in Two Acts,* and *Midas,* both written in the late 1820s, as well as a number of short stories and poems.

Shelley's only surviving child, Percy Florence, became Lord Shelley in 1844. He married a few years later and Mary lived comfortably with his family until her death, at the age of 54, on February 1, 1851.

Summary and Analysis

Volume 1: Letters 1-4 Summary and Analysis

New Characters
Robert Walton: an explorer who writes to his sister Margaret in England; he encounters Victor Frankenstein on the Arctic ice and later records his horrible story

The Creature: a huge figure Walton sees traveling in a dogsled on the ice; later we learn that this is the "monster" created by Victor Frankenstein

Victor Frankenstein: a young scientist, unidentified by Walton in these letters, who is hunting for the monster he created

Summary
Letter One
The novel begins with a series of letters written by Robert Walton, a young English explorer, to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton's first letter, written from St. Petersburg on "December 11, 17—" describes his

plans for an Arctic expedition. He has been preparing for the voyage for six years, gathering information about the Arctic, and training himself physically so that he will be able to endure the harsh climate of the region. Walton also describes his youthful passion for literature. As a young man he had wanted to be a poet, but, after writing for a year, he considered himself a "failure" and he abandoned thoughts of a literary career. When he inherited a fortune from his cousin, he began to plan his Arctic expedition. Walton tells Margaret that he will begin his voyage in June.

Letter Two
On March 28, Walton informs his sister that he has found a crew for his expedition and they are ready to embark on their voyage. He is in a seaport called Archangel, excited at the prospect of his adventure, but he is lonely and longs to meet someone who shares his interests and intellectual curiosity. Walton hopes the man he hired to be the ship's master will turn out to be such a friend. Walton describes this man as being gentle and compassionate, and still recovering from a difficult romance with a young woman he was in love with but couldn't marry. The man had sacrificed himself, allowing the young woman to marry someone else; he also gave her lover land and money because the man was too poor to win the consent of the woman's father. Although it was an honorable deed, the ship's master continues to suffer for it.

In this letter, Walton also refers to Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a poem about a sailor who kills a friendly albatross. The mariner is tormented for this act until he repents and mystical forces finally bring his ship back home. Mary Shelley will mention this poem again later in the novel.

Letter Three
On July 7, Walton is at sea, heading for the Arctic region. His ship is encountering huge floating sheets of ice, but Walton is undeterred, excited by the adventure and determined to continue until he achieves his goal.

Letter Four
This last letter contains three separate entries, beginning on August 5. Walton's ship is stranded, surrounded by ice. As he and his crew survey the situation, they see a huge man in the distance, being pulled on a dogsled. Later that day, the ice breaks and the ship is able to sail again. The following morning, the crew finds another man in a dogsled, trapped on a floating sheet of ice. The man is starving and nearly frozen to death, but he won't come aboard the ship until Walton tells him where the expedition is headed.

The man is half-delirious, but he begins to recover after a few days. Walton describes him as looking slightly mad. He says his guest is good-natured, although he appears to be very sad. The man has little to say until Walton tells him about the huge figure he saw traveling on the dogsled. The man is suddenly very alert, asking Walton many questions about the man and the direction he was headed. Walton is curious to know more about this giant figure, but he doesn't press the issue. Walton understands that the man he rescued is filled with grief and remorse. He tells Margaret that he has begun to love the man "like a brother," but, he says, the man's "constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion."

Walton writes the second part of the letter on August 13. Now Walton feels even greater affection for his new passenger, whose health continues to improve. The man begins to spend time on deck. He is still reluctant to explain the reasons he is looking for the other man. When Walton speaks to the man about his desire to find a good, understanding friend, the man says he understands. He tells Walton, sadly, he once had a friend like that himself, but now the friend is gone and he has nothing left.

Walton writes again on August 19. The man offers to tell Walton his story. Walton decides to make notes; he begins to record the man's experiences, writing them in the first person.

Discussion and Analysis
Mary Shelley uses the device of Walton's letters to Margaret Saville at the outset of the novel to set a realistic

tone for what is otherwise a completely fantastic story. Robert Walton is introduced as a pragmatic man, concerned with facts and the practical matters of his expedition. But he is also a Romantic adventurer, eager for the rewards of new experiences and sensitive to human emotions. Walton is established as a reliable reporter, so his description of his passenger as an honest, sincere man, makes his bizarre story more believable. Walton and his crew also serve as witnesses to the story when they catch a glimpse of the gigantic figure traveling on the ice.

Walton and his passenger share a common bond in their Romantic natures. Both men desire to explore the unknown and are inspired by grand ideas. There is also a strong emotional tie between the two, and they are both quite sensitive and sympathetic towards each other. For the Romantic writer, art and emotion are indelibly linked: art should not only express emotional concerns, but it should also have a strong influence on the emotions of those experiencing that art. Both Victor and Walton are typical Romantic characters. Victor immediately understands Walton's need for a close, spiritual friend. Walton is very aware of the terrible sadness that envelops his guest; he feels a kinship towards him, believing him to be a person of great intuition and judgment. Walton's description of the sad love affair of the ship's master is another example of his Romantic outlook. The ship master sacrifices himself for love, a pure ideal, and Walton is touched by this gesture.

Walton and his new passenger are alike in other ways. They are both sensitive, compassionate men who began their respective adventures with lofty visions, excited at the thought of the great discoveries they intend to make. They were both willing to endure great hardship in order to achieve their goals, and they were single-minded in the pursuit of their objectives. Walton, however, has yet to reach his destination; the other man is at the end of his journey. As Victor relates his story, Walton will hear how this man's quest brought him the most terrible misfortune.

Volume 1: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

New Characters
Alphonse Frankenstein: Victor's father

Beaufort: Alphonse's close friend and Caroline's father

Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein: Alphonse's wife and Victor's mother

Elizabeth Lavenza: Victor's adopted sister

Henry Clerval: Victor's closest friend

Ernest Frankenstein: Victor's brother

William Frankenstein: Victor's youngest brother

M. Krempe: an arrogant professor at the University of Ingolstadt who ridicules Victor

M. Waldman: a friendly professor who advises Victor to study modern science

Summary
Robert Walton records Victor's story, writing his words in the first person: Victor Frankenstein (who has yet to reveal his name) was born in Geneva, Switzerland. He grew up a member of a wealthy, influential family; his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, was involved in politics. One of Alphonse's closest friends was a man

named Beaufort, who had been a successful merchant for years until he lost his business, became sick and impoverished, and eventually died.

Beaufort's daughter, Caroline, had taken care of her father until his death. She worked at a simple job, plaiting straw, in order to support her father and herself. Before Beaufort died, Alphonse found him living with Caroline in a miserable hut. Although Beaufort was ashamed of his situation, Alphonse did what he could to care for him until he died. After her father's death, Alphonse took care of Caroline and eventually married her. Alphonse had long admired Caroline's virtues; he wanted to provide a comfortable home for her, and give her the happy life he felt she deserved but had long been denied.

After they were married, Alphonse and Caroline traveled extensively. Their son was born in Geneva, and the narrator was for several years their only child. The Frankensteins were very concerned with the plight of poor people they encountered around the world. In Italy, during a visit to Milan, Alphonse and Caroline adopted Elizabeth Lavenza, a beautiful peasant baby with striking golden hair. Elizabeth was loved by everyone who knew her, and Victor, who had been an only child, grew up feeling a special affection for her. Several years later, Alphonse and Caroline had another child.

Victor describes his childhood and his insatiable curiosity about the natural world around him: Attending school in Geneva, Victor, who is something of a loner, becomes best friends with another boy, Henry Clerval. Victor and Henry share the same scientific and philosophical interests. Victor is intrigued by natural philosophy after reading the works of Cornelius Agrippa. His father, however, does not approve of Agrippa and he tells Victor that Agrippa's writings are nothing but "trash." Victor is confused by his father's reaction, since Alphonse doesn't bother to say why he is dismissing this scientist. Later on, Victor tells us, he realized that the ancient principles of Agrippa had been "entirely exploded" by the modern system of science, and he wishes his father had taken the time to explain this to him. But for the present, Victor continues to pursue his study of Agrippa, along with the works of Magnus and Paracelsus.

When Victor is 15 he witnesses a violent thunderstorm and watches a bolt of lightning destroy a great old oak tree. This incident excites his curiosity, and he begins to study electricity, galvanism, and other natural phenomena while helping his father instruct his younger brothers, Ernest and William. He describes William, the youngest, as "the most beautiful little fellow." Victor says this was a happy time in his life; he was enjoying his studies and everyone in his family loved each other and got along well.

When he is 17, Victor enrolls in the University of Ingolstadt. He is excited at the idea of going away to study, but he becomes upset when he learns that his friend, Henry Clerval, won't be joining him. Then, before he leaves for the university, Elizabeth comes down with scarlet fever. Caroline nurses her back to health, but in the process becomes deathly ill with the disease herself. Her last wish is for Victor and Elizabeth to marry. Caroline's death deeply affects Victor and he has difficulty accepting that she is really gone. Victor departs for Ingolstadt with mixed emotions. He is very sad to be leaving his friends and family, and uncertain about being on his own.

At the university, Victor meets Professor M. Krempe, a distinguished instructor who teaches natural philosophy. Krempe does not approve of Victor's course of study and ridicules his favorite authors. Victor is disturbed by his encounter with Krempe, but is determined to continue with his studies. He seeks out another professor, M. Waldman, who is an understanding and helpful man. He encourages Victor to study modern science and to learn from science's most recent, exciting discoveries if he wants to penetrate the vast mysteries of nature. Victor tells us his meeting with M. Waldman was a memorable one, and it was a day that "decided my future destiny."

Discussion and Analysis
Victor's happy childhood and ideal family life provides a stark contrast to the previous scenes aboard

Walton's ship. Although we do not yet know why Victor is in the Arctic, it becomes apparent that a terrible tragedy has befallen him. From the warmth and comfort of his father's house, surrounded by friends and family, Victor has somehow ended up alone, half-frozen and emaciated, drifting on a sheet of ice in pursuit of a huge and still, to us, mysterious individual.

Victor's family is described in ideal terms, with loving parents and siblings who care for and enjoy each other. Victor's parents are also humanitarians, using their wealth and status to help those who are less fortunate than themselves. When Caroline dies, Victor is confronted with death for the first time, and it is an experience that will help propel him towards his bold experiments. His great love for his mother, and his inability to accept her death, provide a strong motivation for him to begin his exploration of the great questions of life and death.

Victor's friendship with Walton also takes on an added significance, echoing his feelings for Henry Clerval and Elizabeth, as well as his father's close relationship with Beaufort. Victor has already told Walton about the close friend he had and lost. Deep friendships, a classic Romantic concept (along with concern for the poor and less fortunate), occur throughout the novel and are constantly threatened by either natural phenomena or by Victor's creation, a being who comes to understand how important close relationships are to humans. The creature also will learn how to use those relationships to exact the most effective method of revenge. When the Frankensteins are hurt because of Victor's experiment, the tragedy, and Victor's suffering, is even greater because of the damage to his benevolent family.

Victor's intensive study of the scientists Agrippa, Magnus, and Paracelsus reveals his strong interest in alchemy and the natural sciences. Alchemy is an ancient science concerned with the transformation of base metals, such as lead, into gold. Alchemists also sought cures for diseases as a way to indefinitely prolong life. They were often associated with magicians and necromancers, but their practices remained very different. While necromancers might call on a demon or evil spirit in their work, alchemists believed that the key to understanding was within the mind of the practitioners themselves. Instead of chants and ceremonies, alchemists used substances from nature, mixing and heating them in various combinations, all in an effort to achieve a profound scientific knowledge. Like the necromancers, however, alchemists did believe that individual practitioners should be pure in spirit, devoted to a worthy cause. Both were seeking revelations about nature and existence. These pure ideals were also a part of the Romantic tradition.

Victor's early research into the work of the alchemists is an indication of his interest in discovering the principles of life and death. He is beginning his search for a God-like knowledge, a panacea to cure the ills of humankind. This type of fundamental knowledge, and the possible disastrous consequences of acquiring such knowledge, were also of great interest to the Romanticists.

Volume 1: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 Summary and Analysis

New Character
Justine Moritz: a young woman living with the Frankenstein family

Summary
Under the guidance of M. Waldman, Victor dedicates himself to the study of natural science. He remains at the university for two years, completely absorbed in his studies, and becomes fascinated with the "structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed?" Victor realizes that this is a "bold question" but he is determined to find the answer. He wonders "how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries." Victor understands that such an inquiry into the cause and nature of life will be

extremely difficult, but he applies himself to his studies with an “almost supernatural enthusiasm.” However, during this time, he neglects his family and friends and doesn’t contact anyone in Geneva.

Working on his own, Victor makes an exhaustive study of the process of death and decay in the human body. Eventually he discovers a method of generating life in nonliving matter. Although excited by his discovery—“a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple”—Victor is nevertheless wary of the knowledge he now possesses. He feels that it could be dangerous, but he continues to work, convinced that he will be able to create life and ultimately help humankind. He hopes that one day he will be able to restore life to human beings who have died. To prove his theories, Victor decides to assemble a huge human figure, eight feet tall, that he will eventually bring to life. He believes that working on a larger scale will better allow him to experiment more effectively on normally minuscule parts of the human body.

Victor begins his work by collecting body parts from graveyards and charnel houses. Working alone, he becomes obsessed with his experiment and completely cuts himself off from everyone he knows. Finally, after months of hard work, Victor finishes his work and he infuses life into his creation. However, when the gigantic creature opens its eyes, Victor is immediately horrified by the result. He finds the creature repulsive, with “yellow skin” stretched tightly over its muscles and arteries, a horrible grin, and watery eyes. After working for nearly two years, on what he thought would be a beautiful creation, Victor realizes “the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.” Unable to bear the sight of his creature, Victor rushes from the room and collapses, exhausted from the shock. The creature comes to his room and tries to speak to him, but Victor runs out of his house, desperate to get away from the “thing” he has created.

As the distraught Victor roams through the city, terrified of running into the creature, he meets his good friend Henry Clerval, who has traveled from Geneva to see him. Henry and the Frankenstein family haven’t heard from Victor in months and they are very concerned about him. Victor is overjoyed to see his friend; for a moment he is able to forget his troubles. But when they return to Victor’s house, Victor begins ranting about his creation and Henry thinks his friend is ill with a fever. Victor becomes delirious and Henry takes care of him for several months. The creature has disappeared and Henry is unaware of Victor’s experiments.

When Victor recovers, he receives a letter from Elizabeth. She describes her activities at home and other family news, including information about Justine Moritz, a young woman who has recently become part of the Frankenstein family after her own family died. Victor greatly enjoys the letter and longs to see his home and family again.

Over the summer, as Victor makes plans to return to Geneva, Clerval becomes acquainted with Victor’s friends and teachers at the university. Victor’s professors all praise his remarkable academic achievements. In the fall, an unexpected period of harsh winter weather forces a change in plans, and Victor and Henry have to postpone their departure. They remain in Ingolstadt for the winter where Victor fully recovers from his exhaustion and the shock of his horrible experiment. He enjoys Henry’s company enormously and when spring arrives, Victor is feeling happy and content.

Discussion and Analysis

Victor never actually explains how the creature is brought to life, although he hints at the use of various chemical methods combined with the power of electricity. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of the scientific information we understand today was as yet unknown. Early scientists, however, were making startling discoveries about the natural world and were studying phenomena such as lightning and electricity. There were also great advances in the understanding of human anatomy and physiology. Many of the scientists of the time were fascinated with the power of electricity and its effect on animals. Experiments were also being conducted on human corpses, specifically the bodies of executed murderers. In 1803, Dr. J. C. S. Carpue attempted, unsuccessfully, to revive a hanged man using a powerful electric current, one of several

such experiments during that time. Although Victor's creation may sound fantastic today, we should remember that Mary Shelley's novel was imagined during an era of great scientific discovery and curiosity. The Gothic style in which the novel is written also makes the use of gruesome, supernatural elements acceptable.

The full title of Mary Shelley's novel is *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus*. It is important to note that Frankenstein is not the creature itself, but Victor, the scientist who created the creature out of a desire to help humankind. In Greek mythology, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and created man from clay. His actions greatly offended Zeus, who then created Pandora, a woman who became the guardian of all the world's woes. In Prometheus Bound, a play by Aeschylus, Zeus chains Prometheus to a rock on Mount Caucasus. Each day an eagle eats Prometheus's liver, which grows back at night; when the eagle returns the next day, the torture begins again. Prometheus is punished by Zeus for giving the gifts of intellect, love, and compassion to humankind. Mary Shelley's husband, Percy, also dealt with the Prometheus myth when he wrote Prometheus Unbound, a four-act drama. Shelley's play uses the classical myth to explore the idea that love and goodness will ultimately triumph over human selfishness and evil. In these chapters, we see that Victor is not only creating life, but he is, at the same time, trying to discover a way to overcome life's inevitable consequence, death. We will see, however, that in Mary Shelley's work, Victor is not punished for trying to help human beings. Instead, his endless misery stems from his rejecting and abandoning his own creation.

After he brings the creature to life, Victor is horrified by the creature. The creature only wants to be accepted by Victor; after Frankenstein faints and collapses on his bed, the creature tries to communicate with him, but Victor runs away, leaving the creature hopelessly alone, stranded in a confusing, hostile environment. Victor's action stands in sharp contrast to the love and support his close friend, Clerval, offers him. Harold Bloom notes that "Frankenstein's tragedy stems not from his Promethean excess but from his own moral error, his failure to love; he abhorred his creature, became terrified, and fled his responsibilities." (Bloom, 6)

Volume 1: Chapters 6 and 7 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Before he leaves Ingolstadt, Victor receives a letter from his father, Alphonse, relating the dreadful news that his youngest brother, William, was murdered while the family was on an outing in Plainpalais. During a hike, William wandered off and was discovered hours later, strangled, the killer's handprints imbedded in his neck. Alphonse is terribly upset and he asks Victor to come home to the "house of mourning." Victor is horrified by the news and returns to Geneva immediately.

On his journey home, Victor is sad and fearful. As he is crossing the Alps near Mont Blanc, a vicious storm suddenly appears "at once in various parts of the heavens." Victor looks at the sky and cries out, "William, dear angel! This is thy funeral, this thy dirge!" At that moment he sees a gigantic figure illuminated by a bolt of lightning. Victor instantly recognizes the figure as the creature he brought to life, and he instinctively realizes that it was the creature who killed his brother William. Victor feels an enormous weight of responsibility for having created this "depraved wretch" who delights in death and misery.

When Victor arrives home, he learns that Justine Moritz has been arrested for William's murder. Victor and Elizabeth, however, refuse to believe that Justine is the killer and the family is convinced that she will be found not guilty. During the trial, however, incriminating evidence is introduced, facts that cast doubt on Justine's claim of innocence. In addition to being seen near the scene of the crime, authorities found a locket belonging to William in Justine's pocket. Justine claims she was searching for William herself that night and ended up sleeping in a barn outside the city. She doesn't remember ever taking William's locket, and she doesn't know how it ended up in her pocket. Several character witnesses, including Elizabeth, testify in Justine's behalf, but at the end of the trial, Justine is convicted of the murder and sentenced to death.

Both Victor and Elizabeth are terribly distraught. When they visit Justine in jail, she reveals that, after her conviction, she finally confessed to the murder so that her priest would grant her absolution. She says the priest had "besieged" her since the trial, threatening her with "excommunication and hell fire" unless she confessed. However, she tells Victor and Elizabeth that she is completely innocent. But the sentence is carried out and Justine is hanged the following morning; the Frankenstein family is unable to save her. Although he won't tell anyone about his horrible experiment, Victor is certain the creature committed the crime. He blames himself for the deaths of William and Justine.

Discussion and Analysis
Although, at this point, the true identity of William's murderer remains a mystery, Victor's intuitive suspicion that the creature committed the murder compounds the tragedy of the deaths of his brother and Justine. Victor had hoped to put his experiment at Ingolstadt behind him, but his irresponsible behavior following the creation of his "demon" continues to haunt him. As sure as he is of Justine's innocence, however, Victor refuses to step forward to save her. He never discusses his creation with anyone, nor does he voice his suspicions about the murder to the court. Although he is unwilling to implicate himself in the death of his brother, Frankenstein is convinced that his creature is responsible for the deaths.

Victor also believes that the creature is inherently evil and malicious. His one brief encounter with the creature, two years earlier when he brought it to life, has somehow led him to this conclusion. Later, Frankenstein will learn more about this "monster" that he is responsible for, but he will remain steadfast in his opinion of the dark nature of his creation. Victor is willing to accept responsibility for the creature's existence, but he fails to understand that his own actions after the creature's "birth," as well as the treatment of the creature by other human beings, are responsible for the creature's malevolent behavior.

In Volume One, the story was mainly concerned with Victor's development as a scientist and his obsessive quest to create a living being. Shelley's use of Walton's letters as a framing device for the novel allow us to glimpse the ending of the story at the very beginning; we have a hint of what is to come, and while Victor's life begins full of hope and promise, we have already seen evidence, on Walton's ship, that Victor's actions may lead to a dreadful conclusion. Victor's own innate sense of foreboding failed to prevent him from completing his experiment. Now we begin to see the consequences of his actions.

Volume 2: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Following the deaths of William and Justine, Victor experiences a feeling of profound despair. He created the monster and now he blames himself for the deaths of two innocent people. Alphonse tries to console his son to no avail. Victor's grief is compounded by remorse and his father doesn't understand all of the awful reasons for his son's depression.

The family moves to their house in Belrive, a country estate outside Geneva. At night, Victor often sails alone in the nearby lake, reflecting on his misery. He is so unhappy that he contemplates suicide and "often" considers drowning himself in the lake, but he realizes that this act would only cause his family, and especially Elizabeth, more suffering. Victor continues to live in fear that his creature will strike again, causing more pain and horror. He tells us: "My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived." Elizabeth is also having a difficult time accepting the deaths of William and Justine. She is no longer the innocent, happy person she was before the tragedy. She knows that somewhere William's murderer is walking around freely because Justine was punished for his crime.

Victor is in such torment that he believes his only consolation would be to find the monster and take revenge. But he accompanies his family on a trip to the mountains, hoping the magnificent natural surroundings will

help him forget the terrible incident. The Frankensteins travel to Chamonix, a small town in the French Alps at the foot of Mont Blanc. There Victor finds a small measure of peace, taking solace in the beautiful scenery that helps distract him from his painful memories. One day, as he hikes into the mountains, climbing over loose rocks and scrambling up dangerous ledges, Victor thinks he would be better off if he were an animal, incapable of human thought and concerns.

Victor continues his climb and after several hours makes it to a summit where he rests, looking out over the mountains and a huge glacier that reminds him of the sea. As Victor enjoys the view, allowing himself a small moment of pleasure, suddenly, in the distance, the monster appears. He leaps towards Victor with incredible speed, then stops and addresses his horrified creator. The creature tells Victor that he understands how much Victor hates him, and he knows that Victor would like to destroy him. The monster describes himself as being "miserable beyond all living things." He will never be able to experience the happiness he has seen humans enjoy. "Misery," he says, "made me a fiend." He asks Victor to listen to his story, reminding him that Victor is responsible for his existence. "I am thy creature," he says. If Victor does as the creature asks, the creature promises to go away and leave Victor and his family in peace. Otherwise, the creature says, he will "glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends."

Victor finally agrees to listen to the creature. With a "heavy heart" he follows the creature across a field of ice to a small hut. Together they sit by a fire and Victor listens to his creature's story.

Discussion and Analysis

Victor is now fully aware that he can no longer ignore his creation. After Justine is executed, Victor is divided between two emotional responses: the grief and depression that continue to plague him, and the desire for revenge. Tormented by the deaths of his loved ones, Victor considers the possibility that revenge against the creature may be the only cure for his despair. He chooses, for the moment, however, to visit the Alps with his family, hoping, along with his father, that the trip will restore his "serenity." It is interesting to note that Frankenstein's driving ambition resulted in a creation that is destroying his life. When he began his project, he hoped to gain an understanding of the life process, an ultimate knowledge that would benefit humankind. Instead, he created a monster that is a threat to himself, his family, and, in his opinion, the human race. We will come to learn, however, that the creature is a far different being than the vicious monster Victor imagines him to be.

When Victor agrees to go to the Alps, he is once again shirking his responsibility, denying what he did in his laboratory and refusing to admit it to others. He believes the creature is evil and the murderer of his brother; yet, although his other family members may be in imminent danger, he warns no one, hoping instead that the creature will disappear and choose not to strike again. But as Victor seeks a peaceful refuge in the magnificent scenery of the Alps, the creature seeks him out, refusing to go on being ignored and rejected by Victor. Once again, Shelley uses the Romantic device of placing Victor in a rugged, natural setting, seeking comfort from the beautiful landscapes, as he continues to brood about his life and misfortunes. When he is in the mountains, or alone, sailing on the lake, Victor often considers suicide as he contemplates his dilemma. Here, Shelley follows another Romantic tradition, allowing this highly emotional character, in deep despair, to consider ending his own life. Ironically, Victor's thoughts of suicide contradict his youthful quest at Ingolstadt, when he was obsessed with finding a way to subvert death and create life.

Contrary to Victor's descriptions of him, the creature reveals himself to be an intelligent, emotional being. He is capable of discussing religious and philosophical issues as well as his own feelings and experiences. The creature knows that humans despise him because of his horrid appearance. When Frankenstein calls him a "Devil," the creature is not surprised. "I expected this reception," he says. "All men hate the wretched. . . ." The creature fully understands his role in society and how he is viewed by others. His perception and understanding of human reaction is particularly keen, and he is appalled by Victor's rejection of him. "How dare you sport thus with life?" he asks Frankenstein, who can only respond with rage. Here, the creature is the

reasonable one who only wants his creator to listen to him and try to understand him. Victor finally accepts the creature's proposal, telling us that he understood, at last, what the "duties of a creator towards his creature were," although he follows the creature with a "heavy heart."

Volume 2: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 Summary and Analysis

New Characters
Felix De Lacey: a young peasant the creature observes living in a small cottage in the forest

Agatha De Lacey: Felix's sister who also lives in the cottage

M. De Lacey: Felix's and Agatha's father; the creature tries to make friends with him

Safie: a young Turkish woman who is Felix's fiancée

Summary
Sitting in the hut by the fire, the creature relates his experiences during the two years since Victor created him. The creature tells Victor about the difficulties he had trying to cope with the strange feelings of his senses. Having never had the opportunity to mature in a normal way, the creature was overwhelmed by the many sensations he experienced when he was first brought to life. He also felt confused by Victor's rejection of him, by the bright daylight, and by the feelings of thirst and hunger that constantly plagued him. To escape the intense light, the creature ran and hid in a nearby forest, covering himself with Victor's clothes and, later, a cloak that he finds. He passed his first night in the forest, where he discovered the remains of a campfire. Drawn to the warmth, he plunged his hands into the fire and burned himself. The creature says the experience taught him about the enormous power of fire, along with the benefits of heat and light.

In the forest, surrounded by nature, the creature tells Victor that when he first heard the songs of birds, he found the sound "sweet and enticing." The creature continued to roam through the forest searching for food. When he came upon a small hut, he entered it and found a man preparing a meal. Although the creature meant no harm, the man fled in terror when he entered the hut, and the creature realized that his appearance must be horrible to human beings. The creature enjoyed the man's meal, then found more huts in a nearby village, which he thought was "miraculous" with its neat cottages, huts, and "stately houses." But the villagers were horrified when they saw the creature and they chased and beat him. He escaped into the forest, understanding that he would never be accepted by human beings.

The creature wandered through the forest and eventually came upon a small cottage with a crude shack attached to it. He moved into the shack, glad to find refuge from the cold, wet weather, and relieved to be hidden from the humans who abused him. The creature settled into his new home and soon discovered that he could observe the humans in the cottage by spying on them through a crack in the wall. Inside, he saw an old man living with a young couple. The creature noticed how kind these humans seemed, and how they enjoyed each other's company. He watched them play music, sing songs, and read books and poems together. The creature tells Victor he was amazed by this tranquil scene, although he perceived that the family was unhappy about something. Later, he discovered that they were very poor, although generous and willing to share their meager resources. The creature was moved by their kindness and performed services for them in secret, such as shoveling their snow at night when they slept

As the creature continued to observe the family, he learned that the couple were a brother and sister named Felix and Agatha. They called the old man "father." By watching the family, the creature also learned how to perform a variety of useful tasks, and he discovered the value of speech and the written word. The creature explains that he longed to talk to the family and wanted to learn from them, but he was sure they would be

frightened of him. The creature was aware of how awful he looked because he had seen his reflection in a pool of water and was horrified by his own appearance. As he stared at his reflection, he compared himself to the "perfect forms" of the cottagers, and their "grace, beauty, and delicate complexions." Looking at himself in the pool, he became fully convinced that he was a "monster." This knowledge filled him with the "bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification."

In the spring, Felix's fiancée, a young woman named Safie, moved into the cottage. The creature observed them, learning more as Felix taught Safie about a variety of subjects. The creature came to admire knowledge, virtue, and "gentle manners"; however, the more he learned, the more he understood how hideous he was to others. He suffered from the acute pain of his isolation.

Discussion and Analysis
Here again, Shelley uses the device of a story within a story to continue the series of first-person narratives. Remember that Victor is actually relating the creature's story to Walton who, in turn, is writing it down as a letter to his sister. Walton, who at the outset of the novel is introduced as an intelligent, rational man, serves as an objective reporter of a story that, as it develops, becomes increasingly fantastic.

The creature's first response to human beings is a benevolent one. His natural reaction is to feel sorry for them when they are suffering and cheerful when they are glad. He is even eager to help the peasant family because it makes him feel good. The creature also has a strong emotional reaction to nature. He is impressed by the beauty of the moon and enjoys hearing the "sweet" sounds of the birds in the forest. From reading and observation, he has learned important lessons about history, literature, and spirituality; and he has gained an understanding of human beings and their behavior. As the creature speaks, it soon becomes obvious that he is not malicious by nature. He reacts as any human being might, suffering when he is cold, and enjoying warmth and comfort. He feels joy and sorrow.

In *Frankenstein*, emotions are responsible for many of the characters' actions. An important characteristic of the Romantic movement was the emphasis placed on emotion and intuition. Emotions were employed in the creation of art; in her characterization of the creature, Shelley describes the "monster" as a sensitive being, capable of feeling every human emotion. The creature tells Victor he loves virtue, good feeling, and gentle manners, sharply contradicting Frankenstein's notion that the creature is a "monster" and a "demon." Another Romantic notion, seen here, is the idea that humans are born as kindhearted, moral beings. The creature, born a virtuous innocent, is forced to commit evil because of humankind's attitudes, beginning with Victor's rejection of him.

The creature's experience is pitiable. He has no idea who he is or how he came to be. Utterly alone, he yearns to be with humans, but suffers with the knowledge that he will never be allowed to join their community and enjoy its warmth and companionship. Although he is unique, he nevertheless is capable of experiencing human pain and emotion, but he is not able to share his feelings or enjoy the healing comfort of other beings. Yet his first reaction to this awareness is not bitterness. He finds a certain degree of contentment in merely observing his adopted human family. Ironically, the creature's loving, unselfish attitude reveals him to be superior to Victor Frankenstein. According to Harold Bloom, "the greatest paradox and most astonishing achievement of Mary Shelley's novel is that the monster is more human than his creator." (Bloom, 4)

Volume 2: Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 Summary and Analysis

New Character
Safie's father: a Turkish man Felix helps escape from prison

Summary
The creature continues his story. After spending months observing the peasant family, he was able to learn their language and their family history. The family, known as the De Laceys, were of noble birth and had lived in France for many years. Safie's father, a Turkish merchant, was on trial for an unknown reason, although political motives were suspected. At the conclusion of the trial, Safie's father was sentenced to death, an obvious injustice, and all Paris was indignant. It was generally considered that the man's religion and wealth, and not the alleged crime, had been the cause of his condemnation.

Felix was aware of the trial, too, and he became angry at the injustice of the proceedings. He offered his assistance to Safie's father and one day, while he was visiting him, he met Safie and they fell in love. When Safie's father became aware of the young man's feelings for his daughter, he offered Felix her hand in marriage in exchange for Felix's help in escaping from prison. Felix could not accept such an indelicate offer, but he continued with his plans for Safie's father's escape. Felix then received several letters from Safie, thanking him for helping her father. She also told him about her mother, a Christian Arab who had been enslaved by the Turks because of her beauty. She won the heart of Safie's father, who married her. As Safie grew up, her mother instructed her in the tenets of the Christian religion, and taught her to aspire to the higher powers of intellect and independence. These ambitions, however, were forbidden to women by Safie's husband's religion. But Safie longed to marry a Christian and live in a country where women were allowed to "take a rank" in society.

After the escape, Felix left the country with Safie and her father. The government, however, suspected the De Lacey family of helping the Turkish merchant. Agatha and her father were thrown into prison for five months. Felix returned to France, but he could not help his family. After their trial, the De Laceys lost their fortune and were banished from France, eventually moving to Germany. Safie's father betrayed Felix and returned to Turkey, intending to take his daughter with him. But Safie refused to abandon Felix and she eventually followed him to Germany. The creature tells Victor that he was impressed by the De Laceys' story and very moved by their spirit of "benevolence and generosity."

The creature says he remained in the shed, happy to be close to a family like the De Laceys. One night, while looking for food, he found a "leathern portmanteau" that contained several articles of clothing, and some books, including works by Milton, Goethe, and Plutarch. From Plutarch's Lives he learned the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics, and the value of "high thoughts." From the *Sorrows of Werter*, the creature comes to understand "despondency and gloom." The books stimulated him emotionally and intellectually, and he was moved and fascinated when he read about the creation of man in Milton's Paradise Lost. The creature tells Victor he knows he was rejected by his creator, the way Satan was; and he also understands that, like Adam, he is alone and has no mate. Adam, however, had come forth "from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature." Unlike Adam, the creature says he is "wretched, helpless, and alone." This is why he often considered Satan a "fitter emblem" of his condition. And when he saw the happiness of others, "the bitter gall of envy" rose within him.

He goes on to tell Victor that one day, while he was living in the De Laceys' shed, he happened to discover Frankenstein's journal in one of the pockets of the cloak he had taken from Victor's laboratory. After he learned to read, he studied the journal and read about Victor's experiment and discovered how he was created. He also came to understand that it was Victor Frankenstein, his creator, who had abandoned him.

After this discovery, the creature compared the De Laceys' loving care for each other to Frankenstein's behavior towards his own creation. He cursed Frankenstein in a rage, but sought the kindness of the elder De Lacey, who was blind. Desperate to speak to him, the creature waited until the young people left the cottage. The creature entered the cottage and engaged old De Lacey in conversation. He told De Lacey that he was alone and had "no relation or friend upon earth." The old man agreed that it is a terrible thing to be alone, but

urged him not to despair. “To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by an obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity.” Then he offered the creature his help, telling him “it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.” The creature says he was greatly heartened by the old man’s offer, and was about to tell him his story, when Felix and the others returned. Thinking a monster was attacking his father, Felix rushed to defend the old man. He pummeled the creature and threw him out of the cottage. Saddened and hurt by Felix’s actions, the creature says he didn’t even try to defend himself.

Later, the creature returned to his hiding place in the De Laceys’ shed. He waited for them to arise, but soon realized their cottage was empty. In the morning, Felix returned with another man and the creature listened as Felix told the man his family was terrified and could never live in the cottage again. The creature sinks into a state of “utter and stupid despair,” and for the first time he experienced the feelings of “revenge and hatred.” Later that night, he burned the cottage down, dancing around it “with fury.” The creature says he continued to roam through the forest, in “agony,” although when spring arrived, he briefly felt the joy and spirit of the season. For a moment, he “dared to be happy.” Then, as he continued through the woods, he saw a young girl slip and fall into a stream. The creature pulled her from the water; she was unconscious and he attempted to revive her. However, a man emerged from the woods and shot the creature, wounding him, then grabbed the girl and ran off. Once again, the creature was enraged; his kind act had only resulted in his own pain and misery. His gentle feelings gave way to “hellish rage” and he vowed “eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind.”

The creature curses Frankenstein, recalling the sad event and says from that day, he “declared an everlasting war against the species” and against “him who had formed me.” All his former feelings of kindness turned to hatred and a desire for revenge. After he recovered from his gunshot wound, he roamed for months, searching for Victor, and finally made his way to Geneva. There he saw a beautiful young boy with whom he tried to make friends. He thought that the boy would be too young to have formed any prejudices and decided to seize him in order to “educate him as his companion and friend.” But the boy was horrified by the creature’s appearance. When the creature learned that the boy’s name was Frankenstein, he killed him in a rage and took his locket. The creature tells Victor “I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph.” He now understood that he, too, was capable of creating death and despair. He knew that this was a way to get revenge on his creator. Later he found a young woman, Justine, sleeping in a barn and he placed William’s locket in her apron pocket, thinking she would be blamed for the murder.

The creature laments that now he is alone and in torment. He demands that Frankenstein create another creature, as ugly as he is, so that he can have a companion who won’t reject him.

Victor is astounded by the creature’s request. At first he refuses; he is furious at the creature for killing William and, indirectly, Justine. Victor also can’t bear the thought of being responsible for another horrible monster. But the creature reasons with him. He says he is not evil, only lonely, and therefore miserable. If he had a companion, he would not act with malice towards anyone. If Victor refuses, however, he promises to get revenge so terrible that Victor will “curse the hour of (his) birth.” Then he begs Victor to make him happy by granting his demand.

Victor is moved and feels compassion for the creature. He finally agrees to do what the creature asks, but Victor makes him swear to leave Europe and “every other place in the neighborhood of man.” The creature agrees, promising to stay away from humans forever if Victor will create a companion for him. He tells Victor to get started on his new creation, promising that he’ll be watching. Then he leaves, and Victor, filled with despair about what he has agreed to do, hikes down the mountain to Chamonix where his family had been anxiously waiting the whole night for him to return. When they see him they are alarmed by his haggard appearance. The following day the family returns to Geneva.

Discussion and Analysis
The creature exemplifies the Romantic notion that good nature and kindness are inherent qualities in human beings. Evil results only after the harsh actions of society have taken their toll. The creature is benign, and eager for love and compassion, when he is first created. He responds strongly to the love the De Laceys have for each other, and to Felix's obvious sadness. He is happy when Safie visits and Felix's mood improves. Again, the contrast to Victor's description of the evil, malicious creature is striking.

When he was created, the creature was deformed, but he wasn't a monster. His murderous actions may have turned him into a demon, but only after he was repeatedly abused and rejected by humans. Even after being abandoned by Victor and assaulted by Felix, the creature finds it in his heart to help a human when he saves the drowning girl. But once again, his reward is abuse when the girl's father tries to kill him. Young William's rejection is the final blow. When the boy reveals that his name is Frankenstein, the creature loses control. He performs a horrible act by murdering a child. The creature is exultant after he commits the crime, but only after suffering the cruelty and prejudice of humankind that leads to his desire for revenge. The evil is a product of society's cold rejection of the creature.

When the creature reads Milton's Paradise Lost, he finds many parallels to his own existence. He even calls the book a "true history." He sees himself as a being created by a God who is at war with his own creations. John Milton's Paradise Lost was written in 1667. The entire work, a poem divided into 12 books, tells the story of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve. The poem describes Satan's expulsion from heaven, the war of the angels, and the creation of hell and Satan's offspring, Death and Sin. Milton also offers the promise of salvation by a "greater man," or Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of the poem, Adam and Eve are forced to leave Paradise. The creature identifies with Adam, who, when created, was completely alone, and whose happy innocence was lost; but he also compares himself to Satan, the fallen angel. The creature suffers terribly, tormented by the knowledge that the love and kindness that exist in the world will never be available to him. Frankenstein, his creator, is the creature's God, and only Frankenstein has the knowledge and power to give life to another being. The creature's existence, however, is hardly a blessing and he considers Frankenstein to have cursed him by bringing him to life.

Volume 3: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary
After his return to Geneva, Victor finds that he is unable to "collect the courage" to begin work on the creature's companion. He cannot overcome his repugnance to the work he must do, and he knows he will have to devote several months to the project. Victor tells us that he "clung to every pretense of delay, and could not resolve to interrupt my returning tranquility." But he realizes that, eventually, he will have to begin the dreaded task and fulfill his promise to the creature.

Alphonse is worried about Victor because he seems so depressed. He suggests that Victor and Elizabeth marry, hoping they will find happiness together. Although he loves Elizabeth, Victor cannot imagine getting married in light of the awful thing he has agreed to do for the creature. He assures his father that he will eventually marry Elizabeth, but he cannot tell him the reason he must wait. Alphonse then arranges for Victor to go to England with Henry Clerval to study. He hopes that the "amusement of traveling" will help restore Victor's tranquility. Elizabeth is sad that Victor is leaving, but she hopes he will return a happier person. She regrets that she does not have the same opportunities "of enlarging her experience."

Victor sets off on his trip and meets Clerval in Strasbourg and together they set off for London. They travel along the Rhine from Strasbourg to Rotterdam, where they plan to take a ship to England. On their voyage down the Rhine they pass many beautiful towns and islands, traveling through Mannheim and Mayence. Victor describes the picturesque hills, castles, and vineyards they see along the banks. Throughout the trip,

Clerval is anxious to arrive in London and eager to meet new people, but Victor remains sad and unenthusiastic. Clerval realizes that his friend is depressed. As they travel, he points out the beauty of the landscape, telling Victor, "This is what it is to live; now I enjoy existence!" But Victor can only brood, thinking of himself as a "miserable wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment." He knows that soon he will have to begin work on the new creature.

After living in London for several months, Victor and Henry travel north to Scotland. Along the way, Victor is convinced that the creature is following him. A week after their arrival in Edinburgh, Victor tells Henry that he wants to work alone for a while. Victor fears that the creature will be getting impatient; he fears for the safety of his family, and he knows he must begin his work immediately.

Victor travels to a remote island in Scotland and rents a "miserable hut," where he intends to finish his dreaded task. However, he finds it very difficult to work, having none of the enthusiasm he had when he first began his work in Ingolstadt. He fears meeting the creature again, and he constantly questions himself because he feels sick and filled with "forebodings of evil" about what he is doing.

Discussion and Analysis

Although he is the same age as Clerval, Victor seems much older. The dreadful experiences he has had since he left the university have weighted him down with worry and despair. He no longer shares Clerval's intellectual curiosity and excitement; his life is filled with fear and regret. The enthusiasm and ambition he had only a few years earlier have now led him to a barren island where he must complete a dreaded task. Now when he describes himself he says, "I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul. . . ." This is an image that recalls the giant oak Victor saw destroyed by lightning when he was 15. That event, which so excited him then, inspired him to the scientific explorations that took him to Ingolstadt and resulted in his creating a monster. It is an ironic comment on Victor's youthful quest, an ambitious pursuit filled with hope and promise that has now resulted in Victor's present state of loathing and misery.

As Victor travels with Clerval, the only pleasure he takes is in the magnificent scenery, finding solace there as he did in the natural surroundings of the Alps. Travel through wild, rugged terrain not only inspires Victor, but it also gives him a chance to be alone with his thoughts. Scotland, the Alps, and the Rhine were favorite locations for a number of Romantic writers. The importance of these settings becomes apparent when, in spite of his awful situation, Victor takes time in his narrative to describe some of the sights he and Clerval visit along the Rhine, and in England and Scotland. "Even I," he says, as they sail down the Rhine, "depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased." Later, again in typical Romantic fashion, Victor isolates himself, not only to set up a new laboratory, but also to wrestle with his personal demons. He chooses a remote, barren island as the place to begin work on the new creature, a place surrounded by wild seas and jagged, rocky cliffs.

Shelley establishes the mood of each scene through the actions and emotions of her characters, and by choosing dramatic settings. By placing Victor on the Scottish island, she uses the Romantic device of employing remote, exotic locations to set a mood, as well as to provide a contrast to Victor's psychological and emotional pain. It is also a frightening place, adding to the suspense of the story. Typically, these exotic locales were used by Romantic writers to provide an exciting, intriguing locale for their characters to find solace, or to seek adventure. But Victor knows that an awful job is waiting for him when he reaches the island.

Instead of finding comfort, alone, in this desolate place, Victor knows he is being watched. He grows increasingly "restless and nervous," a feeling compounded by "a solitude where nothing could for an instant call my attention from the actual scene in which I was engaged."

Volume 3: Chapters 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

New Characters
Mr. Kirwin: a judicial magistrate who is in charge of Victor's case in Ireland

Daniel Nugent: a witness in the murder case in Ireland

Nurse: a woman who cares for Victor in prison

Summary
As he labors to bring life to the new creature, Victor recalls his earlier efforts, three years ago in Ingolstadt. He was full of hope then, excited about his experiment, but the result had been a disaster, filling his heart with "the bitterest remorse." Now, as he works in his makeshift laboratory, Victor begins to worry about what will happen when he brings the new creature to life. What if this creature, a female, refuses to abide by the terms of the agreement he made with the first creature? She could be just as angry as the male, and feel as alienated by her deformed appearance. Or, what if she doesn't like the first creature? What would happen if they hate each other? And suppose she is as evil and vengeful as the first creature? Then another horrifying thought consumes Victor when he wonders if the creatures will mate, starting a new, terrible race of beings.

As Victor considers these gruesome possibilities, the creature appears, peering in at him through a window. Shocked at the sight of him, Victor instantly realizes that he cannot keep his promise. As the creature watches, he destroys his new creation, tearing it apart. Outside, the creature lets out an anguished howl and runs off into the night. Later, the creature returns and tells Victor that he is suffering terribly because of what Victor has done. Now he knows he will be alone, without hope, forever. Again, he demands that Victor do as he asks and make him a companion. But Victor is defiant and unafraid. The creature calls Victor his "slave" and reminds him that he has power over him. He tells Victor, "I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!" But Victor tells him that his threats "cannot move me to do an act of wickedness." They only confirm his decision to not create another monster. The creature asks why, if every living man and beast has a mate, he should be alone? "I had feelings of affection," the creature says, "but they were requited by detestation and scorn." The creature vows revenge; he vows that Victor will live to "curse the sun that gazes on your misery." Then the creature tells Victor that he will be with him on his wedding night. Victor lunges at him, but the creature escapes.

After the creature departs, Victor leaves his cottage and walks on the beach. He encounters some fishermen who have a packet of letters for him. One letter is from Henry Clerval, suggesting that they meet in Perth and travel to France together. Victor says this letter "recalled me to life." He decides to leave the island in two days. Victor returns to his laboratory to clean up the remains of the second creature. He looks at the half-finished creature, feeling as if he had "mangled the living flesh of a human being." Victor gathers his laboratory instruments and sinks them into the sea. Then, in the middle of the night, Victor takes the remains of the unfinished creature and throws them into the sea. As he disposes of the female he thinks of the first creature's threat. He feels he is doing the right thing, but nevertheless, he is haunted by his own actions.

Victor then falls asleep in his boat; caught in a strong wind, he drifts far out to sea. When he awakens he is sailing towards Ireland. As Victor comes ashore, he is confronted by an angry crowd. Before Victor can explain himself, the crowd takes him before the local magistrate, Mr. Kirwin. There, Victor is shocked to learn that a man was murdered the night before in a local village. A witness testifies that the man had been strangled. The crowd has brought Victor before the magistrate because they suspect him of committing the murder.

A number of witnesses testify before Mr. Kirwin. Victor listens as they describe finding the body of a man on the beach. The man had apparently been strangled, for the witnesses describe black finger marks on his neck. When Victor hears this, he recalls the death of his brother, William, who had the same finger marks on his neck, and becomes extremely agitated. His limbs tremble and he fights to hold back tears. The magistrate observes Victor's reaction and draws an unfavorable conclusion. When the witnesses finish, Victor is taken to see the corpse of the strangled man. He looks at the body and is horrified to see that it is his dear friend, Henry Clerval. He cries out, "Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny: but you, Clerval, my friend, my benefactor—" Then Victor collapses and is carried from the room. He remains in a delirious state for almost two months, and when he is finally lucid again, he realizes that he is in prison. Victor learns that he has been charged with the murder and will remain in prison until his trial.

As Victor begins to recover from his illness, he becomes better acquainted with the magistrate, Mr. Kirwin. Although Victor must remain in prison, Mr. Kirwin treats him kindly, giving Victor the best room in the dingy place, and sending a doctor and nurse to attend to him. Victor appreciates Kirwin's attention, but he tells him, "on the whole earth there is no comfort which I am capable of receiving." Kirwin, however, continues to express great concern about Victor's situation. He tells Victor he wrote to his father and Victor is immediately worried about the welfare of his family, fearing the creature may have harmed them. But Kirwin assures Victor that his family is well, and tells him his father has come to see him.

When Alphonse arrives, Victor is overjoyed to see him. Alphonse assures Victor that the family is well, but laments his son's latest misfortune. When Victor's case is brought before the grand jury, it is rejected; there is evidence proving that Victor was on the Orkney Islands at the time of the murder. Alphonse is relieved when his son is freed, but Victor remains despondent. He feels that his life has been ruined forever. All he can think of is his murdered friend, Henry, and the "watery, clouded eyes of the monster." As Victor leaves the prison, a free man, he overhears someone remark that he may be innocent of murder, but it is obvious that he has a guilty conscience about something else. Then Victor and Alphonse travel to Dublin where they board a ship to begin their journey back to Geneva. On the voyage home, Victor has a frightful dream, remembering the quiet happiness of his life in Geneva, the death of his mother, and his departure for Ingolstadt. In his dream, he recalls the "mad enthusiasm" that led to his creating the monster, his "hideous enemy," and the night he was brought to life. After a restless sleep, as he is waking up, Victor imagines the creature's hands around his neck.

Discussion and Analysis

When Victor agrees to create the female creature, he immediately regrets making the promise, but he is afraid of what the monster might do if he refuses the demand. Now, a greater worry for Victor is the thought that the second creature will be as evil as the original, or worse. He fears he will unleash a brutal horror upon an unsuspecting world. This is a chance he cannot take, and a responsibility he is unwilling to bear. After he created the first creature, Victor was reluctant to tell anyone about his bizarre experiment. When the creature kills William, Victor allows Justine to be hanged for the crime. Later, he goes to England, thinking the creature may strike again, yet he warns no one about it. As he works on the second creature though, the full weight of responsibility is upon him. He can no longer deny what he has done, nor can he fulfill his gruesome promise to the monster he created.

As he destroys the half-finished creature, Victor commits the ultimate act of human cruelty against his living creation. In front of him, he tears the companion to pieces, condemning the original creature to a wretched, lonely existence without a mate. The creature, who began life innocently, eager for love and understanding, now tells Victor that his only remaining passion is his desire for revenge. In destroying his potential mate, Frankenstein has crushed his last hope. "You can blast my other passions," the creature says, "but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food!" However, Victor has finally accepted responsibility for the havoc he created when he brought his creature to life. He knows he will have to endure the creature's

wrath and suffer the consequences of his actions.

The irony of Henry Clerval's death is apparent to Victor. Earlier he had described his friend as eager and full of life. Victor, of course, was half-dead and filled with despair. Now, Henry is dead and Victor lives, and the creature has murdered another innocent person to satisfy his vow of revenge. One by one, the creature is eliminating loved ones from Victor's life. Victor is plagued by misery and regret. He believes he has destroyed not only his own life, but also the lives of his young brother, an innocent young woman, and his closest friend.

Victor began to cut himself off from his friends and family when he went to Ingolstadt. Obsessed with his studies and experiments, he became remote, growing distant and strange. The existence of the creature served to further isolate him. He wouldn't tell anyone what he had done and he was filled with dread and despair. The creature understands this and he chooses not to kill Victor; instead, he methodically eliminates love and companionship from Victor's life. Now Victor, the creator, will know, as his creature does, the torment of loneliness and seclusion.

Volume 3: Chapters 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

New Characters
Magistrate: a criminal judge in Geneva who listens to Victor's story about the creature

Summary
Victor continues to blame himself for the deaths of William, Justine, and Henry. He says, "I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations." Because he created the creature and unleashed it on the world, he feels that he is really their killer and, therefore, is unfit to live among other human beings. During his imprisonment, Alphonse had often heard Victor make the assertion that he was responsible for the deaths, but he can't understand why Victor feels this way. He wonders if his son is mad.

Victor and Alphonse leave Ireland and travel to France; while they are in Paris, Victor receives a letter from Elizabeth. She tells him that he is free from any obligation of marriage. Elizabeth says she realizes that, in the course of his travels, Victor may have found someone else. However, Victor still loves Elizabeth and he decides to go ahead with the marriage, hoping it will at least make her and Alphonse happy. But Victor can't forget the creature's threat that he will be with him on his wedding night. He writes back to Elizabeth and tells her that he has a dreadful secret he will reveal upon his return to Geneva.

When Victor and Alphonse return home, Elizabeth is disturbed by Victor's emaciated appearance. Elizabeth has also changed, thinner now, and no longer a vivacious beauty. They go ahead with their wedding plans, in spite of Victor's fears that the monster will arrive and make good on his threat. Alphonse arranges for Elizabeth to recover part of her inheritance—a villa, which will be the couple's honeymoon suite. Before the wedding, Victor arms himself with daggers and pistols in case the monster attacks him. Victor assumes the creature will try to murder him. After the ceremony, Victor and Elizabeth sail to Evian where they plan to spend the night at an inn. As the sun sets, Victor is filled with apprehension, wondering if the monster will appear.

That night, a vicious thunderstorm makes Victor even more worried. Leaving Elizabeth in their room, Victor roams through the inn, checking the rooms and hallways to make sure they are secure. Suddenly, he hears a scream and he rushes back to the bedroom where he finds Elizabeth, strangled to death on the bed. Victor faints, but when he comes to a moment later, he sees the monster grinning at him through the window and pointing to the body of Elizabeth. The monster runs off as Victor fires his pistol at him. Other guests join Victor in the pursuit, but the monster has disappeared.

Victor, terribly distraught, is carried back to the inn. He can't believe that his wife has been murdered, and now he fears that the monster will go after his father and the rest of his family. Victor knows that it is his own creation that has destroyed his life, his friends, and his family. When he returns to Geneva, his father is alive but he soon becomes gravely ill from grief over the loss of Elizabeth. When he dies, Victor goes mad and is taken to an asylum. Months later, after he is released, Victor appears before a local magistrate. He tells the official about the monster and the deaths of friends and family. Although the magistrate doesn't believe his story, he warns Victor that such a powerful monster could never be caught. Victor, however, is undeterred. He vows revenge against the creature and sets off to find him.

Discussion and Analysis
The creature has now completed his revenge, infusing Victor with as much hatred for him as the creature feels for mankind. When Victor sets off to seek his own revenge, he is dooming himself to a life of hardship, frustration, and misery. Victor had assumed the creature would try to kill him on his wedding night, but the creature had other plans. He is well aware that death will bring release from the torment of existence. When he murders Elizabeth he is avenging the death of his own "bride"—the creature Victor tore apart in Scotland. But the creature intends to let Victor live, ensuring that his creator will suffer an equal amount of pain and misery.

In her essay, "Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the Maternal," which is included in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (see bibliography), Margaret Homans argues that the creature had long ago replaced Elizabeth as Victor's chief concern. Frankenstein has devoted an enormous amount of love and attention to his studies, and to the actual creation of the monster. In fact, Victor is so absorbed, he doesn't even notice how ugly the creature is until it comes to life. Although she knows nothing about the creature, Elizabeth even hints at Victor's obsession in her letter, asking him if he still wants to marry her, and wondering if he has met someone else. Elizabeth's murder by the creature, Homans says, "suggests not so much revenge as jealousy." Clearly, the creature resents any attempt Victor makes to be happy; happiness is not available to the creature, and it is Victor who is responsible for the creature's existence. The creature will never allow Victor a moment's joy or peace. Victor's life is now as ruined as his monster's.

Victor finally seeks the help of society when he is alone and desperately in need. But when Victor tells the magistrate his story, the judge refuses to believe him. Again, the monster has triumphed; Victor is abandoned by his community and, like the creature, must go off by himself on a lonely quest for revenge.

Volume 3: Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Victor begins his search for the monster. Before he leaves Geneva, he visits the graves of Elizabeth, Alphonse, and William. In the cemetery, he swears that he will find and destroy the creature. As he stands by their graves, he hears a "fiendish laugh"; the monster has followed him to the graveyard. The monster tells Victor he is satisfied that Victor has decided to go on living. He understands that Victor's suffering will continue. Victor chases after the creature, but all he sees is its shape, running with great speed, away from the cemetery.

Since that night, Victor says he has been in constant pursuit of the creature, traveling around the world and enduring terrible hardships. He followed the creature through the frozen lands of Tartary and Russia, exhausted and hungry, eating wild game and depending on the friendship of some villagers who often provided him with shelter and a fire for cooking his meal. During this time, the only thing that kept him going was his single-minded obsession for revenge. At one point, he followed the monster onto a ship that sailed on the Black Sea, but he was unable to catch him. Victor then traveled from village to village, seeking information from local people who may have seen the creature. Victor's only happiness came when he would

sleep, dreaming of Elizabeth and Clerval, the "benevolent countenance" of his father, and his "beloved country." He would dream of being in the arms of his friends, and even during the day, he sometimes would persuade himself that they were still alive.

The monster begins leaving Victor messages, hinting at where he is headed. He taunts Victor, writing, "My reign is not yet over, you live, and my power is complete." In another message, the creature tells Victor: "Prepare! Your toils only begin: wrap yourself in furs, and provide food, for we shall soon enter upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting hatred." He informs Victor that he is going north, where the ice and cold, which don't bother him, will make Victor suffer even more. But Victor is not dissuaded and he continues to pursue the creature, outfitting himself with heavy furs and a dogsled team. Another note from the creature has informed him that they are heading into the Arctic. The monster torments Victor by appearing in the distance and then racing away before Victor can catch him. At this point, Victor has become oblivious to the passage of time. He is unaware of how many months have passed since he began chasing the creature. He continues his pursuit over the Arctic ice fields, but as his sled dogs die, he realizes that he may be facing death himself. Stranded on a sheet of ice, unable to travel, Victor was likely to die when he encountered Walton's ship.

Victor tells Walton that he has recovered, thanks to his new friend's kind attention and care. But, Victor says, he must continue to pursue the monster. He can't ask Walton to go with him, of course; the hardships are too great, so he will go on alone. His only fear is that he may die before he completes his task. He begs Walton to kill the monster for him if this happens. Walton now continues the narrative in other letters to his sister.

Letter of August 26, 17—
Walton writes to his sister, Margaret Saville, that Victor's story might be unbelievable except for the fact that he has seen the monster himself. He has also seen the letters of Felix and Safie, and most of all, has heard the anguish of Victor Frankenstein, and his broken voice, and seen his face suddenly change to an "expression of the wildest rage." Therefore, he believes Victor, even though his story is incredible. He tells Margaret that Victor read over the account Walton had written down, making certain corrections to ensure its accuracy. When Walton asked about the creature's appearance, Victor refused to give a complete physical description of the monster. "Are you mad, my friend?" Victor asked Walton. "Would you also create for yourself and the world a demoniacal enemy?" Victor tells him not to ask such questions.

Walton goes on to describe Victor as a great friend, and a man of wit and intelligence. He hopes that he can persuade Victor to give up his quest and learn to enjoy life again. But Victor does not think he will ever be able to live a normal life, and he can't imagine ever recovering from the loss of Elizabeth and Clerval. Now, Victor has told Walton, he lives only for revenge. He says that only when he catches and destroys the monster, his own creation, will he finally be fulfilled and able to die in peace.

Letter of September 2—
Walton writes that his ship continues to be surrounded by enormous mountains of ice. He fears he and his crew all might perish. Victor, who has grown close to Walton, offers him words of hope and tries to reassure him that the ice will break soon. Victor's words are the only thing that make Walton feel better. He says that "even the sailors feel the power of his eloquence."

Letter of September 5—
The ship is still stranded in the ice. Walton's crew has asked him to return home if the ice breaks. They are afraid to go on and Walton agrees, assuring them he will turn the ship around if the ice releases them. Victor, whose health has once again taken a turn for the worse, is shocked that Walton would give up and abandon his "glorious expedition."

Letter of September 7—
A brief note. Walton writes: “The die is cast; I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed.” His hopes, he says, have been “blasted by cowardice and indecision.”

Letter of September 12—
The ice breaks and the ship is ready to return to England. Victor refuses to give up the chase, but when he tries to get out of bed, he collapses. The ship’s doctor tells Walton that Victor is going to die. On his death bed, Victor insists that he was right to not create the second monster. The potential for evil was too great, and he had a duty to protect his “fellow creatures” from another monstrous creation. But he now understands that it was his own ambition and selfish dreams that led to the creation of the monster and the tragedies that followed. He urges Walton to seek “happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries.” He goes on to say, “I myself have been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed.” Now that he knows he will die soon, Victor finally experiences some peace and tranquility himself, no longer feeling the “burning hatred, and ardent desire of revenge.” He releases Walton from his obligation to pursue the creature. Then Victor Frankenstein dies with a “gentle smile” on his lips.

Victor’s body is placed in a coffin. A while later, Walton hears a noise coming from Victor’s room. He rushes in and discovers the monster standing over the coffin, uttering “exclamations of grief and horror.” Walton writes that he had never seen a being with such a horrible face of “appalling hideousness.” The creature then asks for Victor’s forgiveness. He tells Walton that even though he was responsible for Victor’s misery, he felt sorry for him. But the creature, too, has suffered terribly. All he wanted was to be accepted by someone who could look past his monstrous appearance and appreciate his inner being. He says he was once filled with “sublime and transcendent visions,” but he was “miserable and abandoned” by the human race and couldn’t bear living life alone. He never wanted to harm anyone, but his treatment by humans caused him such suffering that all he wanted was revenge. “Think ye that the groans of Clerval were music to my ear? My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture, such as you cannot even imagine.” After he murdered Clerval, the creature says he pitied Frankenstein and hated himself. He knew that his “insatiable thirst for vengeance” would only cause him misery, but, he says, “I was the slave, not the master of an impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey.” Now that his revenge is complete, all he desires is death.

The creature tells Walton that he will leave the ship and travel north where he will build a funeral pyre and burn himself to death. He bids farewell to Victor and insists that although Victor suffered terribly, he—the creature—suffered more. Then the creature leaps out the window, onto the floating ice, and is carried away by the waves, “lost in darkness and distance.”

Discussion and Analysis
Even on his death bed, Victor is reluctant to give up the driving ambition that has ultimately brought him to his present state of misery. Although Victor advises Walton to give up his ambition, he also urges him not to abandon his “glorious” expedition, even though the crew is terrified and the ship, hemmed in by ice, is in a desperate situation. Frankenstein would have them continue, no matter what the cost. Ironically, although he is well aware of the circumstances that have led to his own ruin, he is unable to apply them when he advises his new friend. The quest for a grand achievement, which was his own undoing, continues to be an overriding concern. Like Frankenstein, Walton’s dreams have brought him face to face with an unpleasant reality. But he seems to have found some meaning in Victor’s tragedy. In spite of his friend’s exhortations, common sense and caution prevail. Walton refuses to destroy himself or his crew. While he is overly impressed by the sensitive, intelligent Frankenstein—the great friend he has long been in search of—in the end, he won’t take his advice.

With Victor's death, the creature has satisfied his desire for revenge. Victor has suffered terribly, both physically and emotionally, and he has endured the gradual destruction of his family, his life, and his future. It is a hollow victory for the creature, though, and he mourns Victor's passing. He still finds it in his heart to feel sorry for his creator, and once his revenge is complete, all he wants to do is die and not leave a trace of himself behind.

Frankenstein was the creator of the creature's body and the manipulator of his emotions. His rejection of the monster results in the vengeful rage that directs the creature's actions during its life. But, in the end, it is the creature who will control his own destiny, choosing to die on his terms after destroying Victor. In "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel," an essay in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (see bibliography) Joyce Carol Oates suggests that by the end of the novel, the creature has become "a form of Christ: sinned against by all humankind, yet fundamentally blameless, and yet quite willing to die as a sacrifice." However, because we do not actually witness his death, the possibility arises that, somewhere, he may still exist. He is "a 'modern' species of shadow or Doppelganger," Oates says. "A nightmare that is deliberately created by man's ingenuity and not a mere supernatural being of fairytale remnant."

Quizzes

Volume 1: Letters 1-4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What does Robert Walton hope to accomplish on his voyage?

2. How did Walton prepare himself for the expedition?

3. What did Walton read for the first 14 years of his life?

4. How old is Robert Walton?

5. Why did the ship's master decide not to get married?

6. How far is the ship from land when Walton sees the gigantic figure in the dogsled?

7. How does Walton describe his expedition when his new passenger asks about the ship's destination?

8. How does Walton feel about the man he rescues?

9. Why is the man Walton rescues traveling alone on the ice?

10. How does Walton feel about hearing his new friend's story?

Answers
1. Walton wants to visit, and walk upon, a part of the world that has never been seen before.

2. Walton prepared by going without food and sleep. He also endured cold temperatures. He worked on whaling ships during the day, and then studied all night.

3. As a child and as a young man, Walton read his uncle Thomas's books of voyages.

4. Walton is 28 years old.

5. The fiancée of the ship's master loved another man. He let her go because he wanted her to be happy.

6. Walton believes he is hundreds of miles from land when he sees the dogsled.

7. Walton tells the man he is on a "voyage of discovery towards the northern pole."

8. Walton says he loves him like a brother, and feels sympathy and compassion for him.

9. The man says, "To seek one who fled from me."

10. Walton is grateful that the man will tell his story, but he worries that telling it will cause the man renewed grief.

Volume 1: Chapters 1 and 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. How did Victor's father spend his "younger days"?

2. While Victor was intrigued by science as a child, what were Elizabeth's chief interests?

3. What did Henry Clerval write when he was nine years old?

4. Where does Victor first come across the works of Agrippa?

5. What does Victor witness during the thunderstorm?

6. Why doesn't Henry Clerval attend the university with Victor?

7. What subject does Professor M. Krempe teach?

8. How does M. Waldman react when he hears the names of Agrippa and Paracelsus?

9. Before he leaves for the university, what does Victor hope to accomplish with his scientific studies?

10. According to Professor Waldman, what have the "modern masters" learned about blood and air?

Answers
1. He was "perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country."

2. Elizabeth was concerned with the "aerial creations of the poets." Victor explains that while he sought to discover the secrets of the world, Elizabeth thought of the world as a "vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own."

3. Henry wrote a fairy tale that delighted all his friends.

4. Victor comes across the works of Agrippa at an inn near the baths of Thonon.

5. Victor witnesses a bolt of lightning that strikes and destroys a tree.

6. Henry's father wants him to join the family business.

7. Krempe teaches natural philosophy.

8. He smiles in a friendly way, without showing any contempt.

9. Victor wants to learn how to "banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death."

10. Waldman says they have "discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe."

Volume 1: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. After he begins his study of natural philosophy, how does Victor feel about M. Waldman?

2. How tall does Victor plan to make his creature?

3. How does Victor describe himself after his months of study?

4. In what month does Victor finally complete his experiment?

5. What color is the creature's hair and lips?

6. After he brings the creature to life, who does Victor dream about meeting in Ingolstadt?

7. What does the creature do when he visits Victor in his bedroom?

8. As he wanders the streets of Ingolstadt, what poem does Victor quote?

9. After he recovers from his illness, how does Victor react when he finally sees his laboratory instruments again?

10. When Henry invents tales to amuse Victor, what kind of writers does he imitate?

Answers
1. Victor says he regards Waldman as "a true friend."

2. He plans to construct a figure that is eight feet tall.

3. Victor says he is pale and emaciated after months of study.

4. He brings the creature to life "on a dreary night of November."

5. Black. Victor describes the creature as having flowing hair of "lustrous black" and "straight black lips."

6. Victor dreams about meeting Elizabeth in Ingolstadt.

7. The creature grins and holds out his hand to Victor.

8. He quotes lines from Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the same poem that was referred to earlier in Robert Walton's second letter to his sister.

9. He becomes nervous and suffers from renewed anxiety at the thought of his experiment.

10. Henry imitates the style of Persian and Arabic writers.

Volume 1: Chapters 6 and 7 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Who is Ernest Frankenstein?

2. Why did William hide from Ernest in Plainpalais?

3. Why did Elizabeth feel responsible for William's murder?

4. How long has Victor been away from home, studying at Ingolstadt?

5. When Victor sees the creature in the Alps, why doesn't he pursue it?

6. How has Elizabeth changed in the six years since Victor has seen her?

7. How does Justine look and behave during her trial?

8. How did Justine react when she was shown William's body?

9. Whom does Victor consider to be the "true murderer" of William?

10. How does Elizabeth feel after she visits Justine in prison?

Answers
1. Ernest is Victor's and William's brother. He returned alone after he and William went off to play.

2. William and Ernest were playing hide-and-go-seek.

3. Elizabeth had given William the locket. She assumed the murderer killed William to get the locket, however, she believes Justine is innocent.

4. Victor has been away for six years.

5. The creature would be impossible to catch. Victor has seen it bound up Mount Saleve with tremendous speed and agility.

6. Elizabeth has grown up and become an "uncommonly lovely" woman.

7. Victor describes Justine as being calm and tranquil during the trial, and "confident in innocence."

8. She became hysterical and was ill for several days.

9. Victor thinks of himself as the "true murderer."

10. Although Justine has been condemned to death, Elizabeth is relieved to learn that Justine is really innocent. If Justine had been guilty, Elizabeth would have felt terrible anguish at being deceived by someone

she loved and trusted.

Volume 2: Chapters 1 and 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Where does the Frankenstein family move to after Justine is executed?

2. How does Victor spend his time at Belrive?

3. When does Victor like to sail his boat?

4. Besides sailing, what else does Victor consider doing at the lake?

5. How do Victor and his family travel to Chamonix?

6. What is Victor looking at when the creature appears?

7. What does Victor call the creature when he first sees him?

8. What happens when Victor tries to attack the creature?

9. Why does Victor agree to listen to the creature's story?

10. What is the creature's mood when he enters the hut with Victor?

Answers
1. The family moves into their house in Belrive.

2. Victor sails his sailboat aimlessly, letting the wind blow him in any direction.

3. He usually sails at night, after his family has gone to sleep.

4. Victor thinks about committing suicide by drowning himself in the lake.

5. They travel first by carriage and later, as they enter the mountains, by mule.

6. Victor is looking at Mont Blanc and Montanvert, two mountains in the Alps.

7. Victor calls him "Devil!" and a "vile insect."

8. When Victor springs at the creature, the creature easily eludes him.

9. Victor is not only curious, but he is also moved by a strange compassion for the creature, and he feels a sense of duty because he is the monster's creator.

10. Victor says the creature is exultant.

Volume 2: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What is the first food the creature eats when he goes into the forest?

2. What does the creature call the moon?

3. What weapons do the villagers use to attack the creature?

4. What does Agatha, the young girl, do after she finishes playing her musical instrument?

5. Why is the creature perplexed at first by the unhappiness of the peasant family?

6. Who is the saddest member of the peasant family?

7. Do Felix, Agatha, and their father realize it is the creature who is helping them?

8. How does Felix change when Safie arrives?

9. What pet name does Felix call his fiancée?

10. What book does Felix use to instruct Safie?

Answers

1. The creature eats berries he finds growing on a tree.

2. The creature calls the moon the "orb of night."

3. They use stones and "other kinds of missile weapons."

4. Agatha holds her brother and sobs.

5. The family appears to have everything they need—food, shelter, clothing—and the creature doesn't understand that they are actually living in poverty.

6. The creature believes Felix must have suffered more than the others because he appears to be the saddest person in the cottage.

7. They think it is a magical "good spirit" that is helping them.

8. Felix is delighted to see her, and "every trait of sorrow vanished from his face."

9. Felix calls her his "sweet Arabian."

10. Felix reads Volney's *Ruins of Empires*. By listening to Felix read, the creature gains an insight into the "manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth." After hearing about the wonderful and terrible deeds of humankind, the creature wonders how humans could be "at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base."

Volume 2: Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What French city did the De Laceys live in?

2. At the conclusion of his trial, what sentence does Safie's father receive?

3. Why didn't Safie's father want her to marry Felix?

4. What does Safie take with her when she leaves Turkey?

5. What are the creature's "chief delights" when he is living in the shed?

6. How does old De Lacey describe the hearts of men to the creature?

7. What does the De Lacey family do after their encounter with the creature?

8. What does the creature do to the De Laceys' cottage?

9. What happens when the creature sees the young girl fall into the stream?

10. Why does the creature think William will not be frightened by his appearance?

Answers
1. The De Laceys lived in Paris.

2. Safie's father is condemned to death.

3. He loathed the idea that she would ever marry a Christian.

4. Safie takes her jewels and a small sum of money.

5. The creature enjoys nature, especially in the summer, delighting in "the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel."

6. He says the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by self-interest, are "full of brotherly love and charity."

7. They move out of the cottage and the creature never sees them again.

8. The creature burns it to the ground.

9. The creature saves her from drowning and pulls her back to safety.

10. When the creature meets William, whom he at first only knows as an anonymous boy, he believes the boy is too young to have formed any prejudices about "deformity." The creature mistakenly thinks the boy will accept the way he looks.

Volume 3: Chapters 1 and 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Why does Victor want to go to England?

2. Why does Alphonse want Victor to marry Elizabeth?

3. How long does Victor plan to be away from Geneva?

4. What does Victor take with him on his trip?

5. What poem does Victor quote from as he describes the beautiful scenery on his trip?

6. In London, why does Clerval remind Victor of his "former self"?

7. Why does Victor agree to go to Scotland?

8. How does Victor feel when he and Henry visit Hampden's tomb?

9. While he is traveling in Scotland, what does Victor fear the creature might do?

10. To what islands does Victor travel in Scotland?

Answers
1. He wants to go to England to create a companion for the creature; Victor must continue his studies and learn about the new scientific discoveries that were made in England.

2. Alphonse realizes that his son is depressed; he hopes the marriage will make him happy.

3. Victor plans to be away for two years.

4. At the last minute, Victor remembers to pack his chemical instruments.

5. Victor quotes from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey."

6. Victor says Clerval is "inquisitive, and anxious to gain experience and instruction." He reminds Victor of himself when he was young and enthusiastic.

7. Although he "abhorred society" and doesn't want to visit any new friends, Victor is anxious to see mountains and streams again, and to be in a natural setting.

8. For a moment, Victor forgets his troubles. He feels free, filled with a "lofty spirit" as he recalls Hampden's heroic deeds.

9. Victor is afraid the creature will kill his family in Geneva, although he also thinks the creature is following him.

10. Victor goes to the Orkney Islands to begin working on the companion for the creature.

Volume 3: Chapters 3 and 4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Where does the creature go after Frankenstein destroys the female creature?

2. What do the fishermen deliver to Victor while he is sitting on the beach?

3. Does Victor ever reconsider his actions after he destroys the female creature?

4. Is Victor afraid when he is adrift at sea?

5. What language does Victor use to address the Irish people?

6. How does Victor describe Mr. Kirwin?

7. What did the fishermen do when they found Clerval's body?

8. While he is delirious, what does Victor say that implicates him in the murder of Clerval?

9. What does the prison nurse tell Victor about his father?

10. Does Victor care that he is in prison?

Answers

1. The creature runs out of Frankenstein's hut and rows out to sea.

2. The fishermen deliver a letter from Clerval suggesting that they travel to France together.

3. After he destroys the creature, Victor doubts himself, wondering if he did the right thing. But he says, "I banished from my mind every thought that could lead to a different conclusion."

4. Even though he is miserable, Victor is grateful to be alive when the sea becomes calm and he sees land in the distance.

5. Victor speaks to them in English.

6. Mr. Kirwin is an "old, benevolent man, with calm and mild manners."

7. The fishermen brought the body to a nearby house and went to town for a doctor.

8. Victor blames himself for the deaths of Henry, William, and Justine, raving that he is the murderer of all three.

9. She tells him that his father has come to visit him.

10. Because he is in such anguish, it makes no difference to him. Victor tells us that "to me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were alike hateful."

Volume 3: Chapters 5 and 6 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. After he is released from prison, does Victor tell his father about the creature?

2. Why do Victor and Alphonse go to Paris?

3. Besides thinking that Victor may have found someone else, why does Elizabeth believe that Victor may not really want to marry her?

4. Does Elizabeth love Victor?

5. How does Victor behave in the days leading up to his wedding?

6. What does Victor think the monster plans to do on Victor's wedding night?

7. Where do Victor and Elizabeth intend to live after their wedding?

8. How does Victor get back to Geneva from Evian?

9. How does the magistrate react when Victor tells him his story?

10. What is Victor's response to the magistrate?

Answers
1. Even though Alphonse wonders why his son keeps blaming himself for the murders, Victor never tells him about the creature.

2. Alphonse has to attend to some business there.

3. When Elizabeth saw Victor in Geneva, she assumed he was depressed because of his obligation to marry her.

4. She loves him, but she worries that he is not really interested in marrying her.

5. Victor pretends to be happy. He fools his father, but not Elizabeth.

6. Victor thinks the monster will try to kill him.

7. Victor and Elizabeth plan to live in a house that was purchased for them near Cologne.

8. He can't sail because of the storm, so he hires several men to help him row back to Geneva.

9. He is incredulous at first, but he soon grows more interested and shudders with horror as Victor relates his tale.

10. Victor becomes enraged when the magistrate, who doesn't believe him, tries to calm him down.

Volume 3: Chapter 7 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. As Victor pursues the creature, what is the one thing that gives him pleasure?

2. What clues does the creature leave for Victor?

3. What does the creature steal from the villagers by the sea?

4. Why is Victor stranded on the ice?

5. How does Victor move his ice raft towards Walton's ship?

6. How is the creature's soul described by Victor ?

7. In his youth, what did Victor think he was destined to achieve?

8. Is Margaret Saville married?

9. When Walton's crew wants to return home, what does Victor advise them?

10. Although Frankenstein wanted to destroy the monster, in his speech over Victor's body, what does the creature say would have been a more satisfying revenge?

Answers
1. Victor finds pleasure only when he sleeps at night and dreams of Elizabeth and Henry, alive and healthy.

2. The creature leaves messages carved on rocks and trees.

3. The creature takes their store of winter food and a dogsled team.

4. Victor followed the creature onto the ice and could see him in the distance. But when he is within a mile of him, the creature disappears and the ice breaks apart, leaving Victor stranded.

5. Victor breaks his sled apart and uses the wood to row towards the ship.

6. He says his soul is "as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice."

7. Victor tells Walton that, as a young man, he felt he was destined for "some great enterprise." He believed that his good judgment would enable him to accomplish "illustrious achievements."

8. Yes. Walton mentions that she has a husband and children.

9. Victor tells them not to give into fear and cowardice. They should continue the expedition and return home as heroes.

10. The creature says that Victor's desire for revenge against him would have been "better satiated in my life than in my destruction."

Characters

Henry Clerval
Victor's closest friend and companion, who balances his emotional and rational pursuits. He studies Oriental languages but passionately loves nature and life. Victor acknowledges that "[H]is wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart." And unlike Victor, who wishes to learn "the secrets of heaven and earth," Clerval aspires "to become one among those whose names are recorded in story as the gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species."

After Victor runs from the creature when the creature comes to life, Clerval nurses Victor back to health, playing the role of protector and comforter—a role Victor fails to assume for his own "child," the creature. The creature eventually strangles and kills Clerval because Victor destroys his half-created mate. Victor then vows revenge upon the creature.

The creature
Like a newborn baby reaching out to his mother, the creature reaches out to Victor when he is transformed from an inanimate to an animate being. Victor labored for two years in order to give the creature life, but he is so appalled by the creature's hideous appearance that he flees, leaving the creature to fend for himself. Shelley initially leaves her readers in suspense as to the creature's whereabouts. We do not hear his story until after he finds Victor and requests a mate for himself. He describes his life to Victor after he "awoke," explaining the difficulties he had learning basic survival techniques. The creature then describes his happiest moments watching the De Lacey family together. Living in a shack attached to the De Lacey cottage, the creature viewed the family without their knowledge. He discovered a family relationship rooted in mutual respect and benevolent love, he learned how to speak and to read as the result of Safie's efforts to learn English, and he "looked upon crime as a distant evil".

John Locke, a famous eighteenth-century philosopher, invented the concept of the "Tabula Rasa," the idea that the mind is a "blank slate" when we are born. Most critics agree that Locke strongly influenced Shelley's characterization of the creature. She wanted her readers to understand how important the creature's social conditioning was to his development as a conscious being. The creature's environment, therefore, plays a critical role in shaping his reaction to and interaction with Victor during their first meeting. While the creature uses both rational and emotional appeals to convince Victor that he deserves and needs another being like himself to share his life with, he tries to emphasize Victor's duties as a creator The creature eventually realizes that not only has Victor rejected him, the entire race of humankind abhors his image—an image resembling no one else in existence.

The creature vows revenge against his creator and takes Victor's youngest brother, William, as his first victim. After this incident, he discovers Justine asleep in a barn, and purposely puts William's locket in her hand so that she will be accused of the murder. Clerval and Elizabeth's murders follow this incident after Victor goes back on his promise to create a mate for the creature. The creature finally appears at Victor's death bed and confesses his crimes to Walton. He assures Walton that he will fade from existence when a funeral pile consumes his body with flames and sweeps him into the dark sea.

Agatha De Lacey
Daughter of Mr. De Lacey, Agatha shows tenderness and kindness towards her family and Safie. She too, however, is horrified by the creature and faints upon seeing him.

Felix De Lacey
A hard-working son who cares for his family and his beloved Safie. He appears sad and unhappy until Safie, his fiancee, arrives at his home. His involvement with Safie's father gets him, his father, and his sister Agatha

exiled from their homeland, France. Nevertheless, his unasked-for kindness to Safie's father, a foreign convict, stands in contrast to his cruel dismissal and beating of the creature, who is doing nothing but sitting at the feet of Felix's father.

Mr. De Lacey
As the blind father of Felix and Agatha, Mr. De Lacey serves as a surrogate father to the creature. The creature notes his benevolence towards his family, and notes that "he would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me." De Lacey and his children are in their current exile because of the aid they rendered, unasked, to a Turkish merchant who was wrongly sentenced to death; the merchant later betrayed them. Because Mr. De Lacey is blind, the creature approaches him to try to gain his sympathy and friendship Even though Felix and Agatha return home and run the creature off, Mr. De Lacey is the only one in the book who does not judge or fear the creature.

Alphonse Frankenstein
Victor's father is described by his son as "respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business." Alphonse met Victor's mother because of his persistence in pursuing a friend who had fallen on hard times in order to give him assistance. Alphonse is also a nurturing, loving parent, and tries many times to remind Victor that family and happiness are just as important as books and learning. It is his letters to Victor that serve as occasional reminders of the outside world while he is occupied with his experiments.

Caroline Frankenstein
Victor Frankenstein's mother, Caroline was the orphaned daughter of an impoverished merchant who was one of Alphonse Frankenstein's merchant friends. She married the much-older Alphonse two years after he completed his long search for the family. A devoted mother, she contracts the scarlet fever while caring for Elizabeth, Victor's adopted sister. She dies just before Victor leaves to attend the University.

Victor Frankenstein
Born to an affluent, loving family, Victor Frankenstein hopes to leave a lasting impression on his fellow humanity. He leaves home to attend the University of Ingolstadt, where he studies natural sciences. His professor M. Waldman inspires him to push his experiments beyond the realm of "acceptable" science, so he begins to determine the limits of human mortality. Collecting cadaver parts from graveyards, he slowly pieces together the form of a human being. It takes him two years to complete his experiment, but when he finally gives his creature the spark of life, Victor can only run in fear. The creature's hideous appearance appalls Victor, upsetting him so much that he becomes very ill. He knows nothing about the creature's whereabouts until the creature finally approaches him.

Although Victor listens to his creature's tale with a mixture of loathing and dread, he reluctantly acknowledges that he owes the creature "a small portion of happiness"; so he promises to create a mate for the creature. After much consideration, however, Victor fears the consequences of his decision and destroys what little of the female he had created. Although he honestly believes the creature despises humanity and would therefore inflict harm upon anyone and everyone, Victor is more concerned about the creature and his mate creating other "monsters" to wreak havoc upon society. Although he feels guilt for the monster's actions, realizing that by making the creature he is the cause of them, he never accepts responsibility for how he has driven the creature to vengeance.

Ironically, he continues to worry about the creature's treatment of others even when both of them slip deeper into the Arctic Iceland, far away from any form of civilization, and even after he hears of the creature's benevolent efforts to help the De Lacey family survive. The ending of the novel only reaffirms Victor's truly selfish motivations, as he fails to consider the needs of Walton's crew by asking them to continue their journey in order to kill the creature. He even calls the crew members cowards for wanting to return home without

completing their mission. What Victor does not realize is that his quest to conquer the unknown has left him without family or friends; he dies on Walton's ship as lonely and bitter as his unfortunate creature.

Throughout the novel, Victor's self-centered actions are shown in stark contrast to those of his family, friends, and even strangers. Whereas his parents have taken in two orphaned children and treated them as their own, Victor relinquishes responsibility for the only creature he has actually created. Unlike Elizabeth, who testifies on Justine's behalf despite the other townspeople's disapproval, Victor remains silent because he fears to be disbelieved or thought insane. Even the behavior of minor characters such as Mr. Kirwin, who exerts himself to nurse and defend a stranger who to all outward appearances is a murderer, serves to show how Victor is unnaturally selfish and as a result has performed an unnatural act.

William Frankenstein
Victor's youngest brother, who runs from the creature's presence in fear. The creature kills him, but Justine Montz, a family friend, gets blamed for the death. Victor knows from the first that the creature is the murderer, but arrives home too late to prevent Justine from accepting blame for William's death.

Frankenstein's monster
See The creature

Mr. Kirwin
An Irish magistrate who believes Victor is responsible for Clerval's murder, for Victor is agitated on hearing the manner of the man's death. After Victor becomes bedridden upon viewing Clerval's corpse, Kirwin cares for Victor's needs and helps him recover his health. Kirwin is sympathetic to the suffering young man, even though his feverish ravings seem to indicate his guilt in the murder. He also arranges for the collection of evidence in Victor's behalf, sparing him a trial.

Elizabeth Lavenza
The Frankensteins adopt Elizabeth when she is only a girl. She and Victor share more than the typical sibling affections for each other; they love each other and correspond while Victor attends the University. In her letters to him, Elizabeth keeps Victor abreast of family and other social matters, such as town gossip. She also describes Justine's welfare, reminding Victor that orphans can blossom physically as well as mentally, given the proper love and attention. Her unselfish behavior serves as a contrast to Victor's: Elizabeth gives testimony on Justine's behalf during her trial while Victor remains silent even though he knows Justine did not murder William. Elizabeth and Victor are reunited and get married, despite the creature's threats to be with Victor on his wedding night. Elizabeth is kept ignorant of the creature's existence and his threats, and when Victor leaves the room on their wedding night, the creature kills Elizabeth.

Justine Moritz
The Frankenstein family adopts Justine because she had been abandoned by her mother. She is a favorite of Caroline Frankenstein, but returns for a time to her own mother after Caroline's death. Justine later returns to the Frankensteins, and continually reminds Elizabeth "of my dear aunt." She is found with young William's locket after his death and put on trial for his murder. Although Victor knows the creature is responsible for William's death, he says nothing at Justine's trial, reasoning that "I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me." Despite Elizabeth's testimony regarding Justine's good character, she is sentenced to death and then executed.

Safie
Safie becomes known to Felix through the letters of thanks she writes to him. Although her father is Turkish, her mother was a Christian Arab who had been enslaved by the Turks before marrying one of them. Safie cherishes the memory of her mother, who instructed her daughter in Christianity and fostered "an

independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammed." Against her father's wishes, Safie flees Turkey and joins Felix De Lacey and his family. Her broken English becomes a learning opportunity for the creature, because he receives the same language lessons as she does. Shelley's stereotypical treatment of Turkish Muslims in her portrayal of Sadie's situation was most likely a way to bring up the issues of women's rights that were articulated by her mother, writer Mary Wollstonecraft.

Margaret Saville
Robert Walton's sister, with whom Walton corresponds at the beginning and end of the novel.

M. Waldman
Victor's kind professor inspires him to "unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation." Victor hears M. Waldman's lecture on the progress of science and determines "more, far more, will I achieve." The behavior of this man of science stands in stark contrast to Victor's, for M. Waldman takes time away from his research to teach Victor and introduce him to the laboratory, whereas Victor pursues his experiments to the exclusion of all else.

Robert Walton
Walton's letters begin and end the novel, framing Victor's and the creature's narratives in such a way that Walton embodies the most important qualities found in both Victor and his creature. Walton, in other words, balances the inquisitive yet presumptuously arrogant nature of Victor with the sympathetic, sensitive side of the creature. As an Arctic explorer, Walton, much like Victor, wishes to conquer the unknown. Nevertheless, when he discovers Victor near death on the icy, vast expanse of water, he listens to Victor's bitter and tormented tale of the creature. This makes him reconsider continuing his own mission to the possible peril of his crew. When the creature appears at Victor's deathbed, Walton fails to fulfill Victor's dying wish to destroy the creature. Instead, he does what Victor continually failed to do throughout the novel: he listens to the creature's anguished tale with compassion and empathy.

Themes

Alienation and Loneliness
Mary Shelley's emphasis on the Faust legend, or the quest to conquer the unknown at the cost of one's humanity, forms a central theme of the novel. The reader continually sees Victor favor his ambition above his friendships and family. Created by a German writer named Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the Faust myth suggested that the superior individual could throw off the shackles of traditional conventions and alienate himself from society. English Romantic poets, who assumed the status of poet-prophets, believed that only in solitude could they produce great poetry. In *Frankenstein*, however, isolation only leads to despair. Readers get the distinct feeling that Victor's inquisitive nature causes his emotional and physical peril because he cannot balance his intellectual and social interactions. For instance, when he leaves home to attend the University of Ingolstadt, he immerses himself in his experiment and forgets about the family who lovingly supported him throughout his childhood. Victor actually does not see his family or correspond with them for six years, even when his father and Elizabeth try to keep in touch with him by letters. Shelley's lengthy description of Victor's model parents contrasts with his obsessive drive to create the creature.

Margaret's correspondence with Walton at the beginning of the novel also compares with Shelley's description of Victor's home life; both men were surrounded by caring, nurturing individuals who considered the welfare of their loved ones at all times. Not surprisingly, Walton's ambition to conquer the unknown moves him, like it does Victor, further away from civilization and closer to feelings of isolation and depression. The creature, too, begins reading novels such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werter* and John Milton's Paradise Lost, claiming that an "increase of knowledge only [showed] what a wretched outcast I was." For the creature, an increase in knowledge only brings sorrow and discontent. Victor and Walton ultimately arrive at these two states because

of their inquisitive natures.

Nature vs. Nurture
The theme of nurturing, or how environment contributes to a person's character, truly fills the novel. With every turn of the page, another nurturing example contrasts with Victor's lack of a parental role with his "child," the creature. Caroline nurtures Elizabeth back to health and loses her own life as a result. Clerval nurtures Victor through his illness when he is in desperate need of a caretaker after the creature is brought to life. The De Lacey's nurturing home becomes a model for the creature, as he begins to return their love in ways the family cannot even comprehend. For instance, the creature stopped stealing the De Lacey's food after realizing their poverty. In sympathy, he left firewood for the family to reduce Felix's chores. Each nurturing act contrasts strongly with Victor's gross neglect of the creature's needs. And by showing the affection between Caroline Frankenstein and her adopted daughters Elizabeth and Justine, Shelley suggests that a child need not have biological ties to a parent to deserve an abundance of love and attention.

Appearances and Reality
Victor's inquisitive probing causes him to delve beneath the appearances of "acceptable" science and create an animate being from inanimate materials. Nevertheless, he forgets to extend this inquiring sensibility toward his creature. The creature's physical appearance prompts Victor to flee from his creation; Victor never takes the time to search beneath the creature's ugliness to discover the very human qualities that the creature possesses. While Victor easily manipulates nature and natural laws to suit his own intellectual interests, he lacks an understanding of human nature, as proven throughout the novel.

In addition to the importance of the creature's appearance, Shelley emphasizes the magnificent landscape throughout the novel. This demonstrates her loyalty to the Romantic movement of her time, which often glorified nature. Although Victor often turns to nature to relieve his despondent thoughts, Clerval notices the intimate interaction between nature and humans in Switzerland. He says to Victor, "Look at that . . . group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half-hid in the recess of the mountain." Clerval looks beyond nature's surface appearance, drawing Victor's attention to the harmonious interaction between nature and a productive society. Victor praises his friend as having a "wild and enthusiastic imagination [which] was chastened by the sensibility of his heart," a sensibility Victor ironically lacks. In the isolated Arctic, when Walton's ship is trapped by mountains of ice, he respects nature's resistance to his exploration and eventually leaves the untamed region. Like Clerval, Walton experiences life by interacting harmoniously with nature and people, as he proves when he honors his crew members' request to return home.

Duty and Responsibility
Victor's inability to know his creature relates directly to his lack of responsibility for the creature's welfare or the creature's actions. The role of responsibility or duty takes many shapes throughout the story, but familial obligations represent one of the novel's central themes. Whether Caroline nurses Elizabeth or Felix blames himself for his family's impoverished condition, Victor's dismissal of his parental duties makes readers empathize with the creature. Victor only feels a sense of duty after the creature says the famous line, "How dare you sport thus with life. Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind." The creature compares himself to Adam—thus comparing Victor to God—and claims that Victor owes him a certain amount of happiness. Even though the creature temporarily convinces Victor to grant him his rights, Victor never really learns the virtues of parental or ethical responsibility.

Justice vs. Injustice
By showing how Victor ignores his responsibilities while those around him do not, Shelley invites the reader to judge his character. Themes of justice and injustice play a large role in the novel, as the author develops issues of fairness and blame. Usually those characters who take responsibility for others and for their own actions are considered fair and just. For example, Elizabeth pleads Justine's case in court after Justine is accused of William's murder. Victor knows the creature committed the crime, yet he does not—or

cannot—reveal the creature's wrongdoing.

However, the most important aspect of the trial is Justine's confession. Elizabeth claims, "I believed you guiltless . . . until I heard that you had yourself declared your guilt." When Justine explains that she confessed after being found guilty because that was the only way to receive absolution from the church, Elizabeth accepts her at her word and tells her, "I will proclaim, I will prove your innocence." Making confessions, listening to others, and offering verbal promises all signal the highest truths in this novel. Elizabeth accepts Justine's guilt only if Justine says she is guilty; never mind the facts or evidence, never mind intuition—words reveal true belief. Except for Victor, every character listens to others: Mr. Kirwin listens to Victor's story, the creature listens to the De Lacey family, Felix listens to Safie's father, Margaret listens to Walton, and Walton listens to Victor and to his crew. Listening helps all of these characters distinguish fair from unfair. Victor's refusal to listen impartially to his creature says much about his character. Shelley suggests that Victor not only played God when he created the creature; he also unfairly played the role of judge and accuser.

Forbidden Knowledge

One thing that connects Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton, perhaps the most important thing, is the fact that they seek to gain knowledge of the forbidden, whether it is a science that is closer to witchcraft or a region covered with impassable ice. In Mary Shelley's time science was just beginning to make powerful strides alongside the beginnings of industrialization; she feared that these strides were somehow inhuman, that there were things Man was not meant to know. She created the tandem characters to show the two paths the pursuit of forbidden knowledge creates.

Victor's pursuit of a way to create life in the end only destroys lives, including his and the monster's; nevertheless, he continues his pursuit. He even metaphorically pursues the monster, the result of his experiments, to end the destruction he himself created. Victor has no one but himself to blame, Shelley might be telling us, because he violated the boundaries of what Man needs to know. Once violated, those boundaries fall behind, leaving disaster in their wake.

Walton takes the path Victor refuses. Through Victor's example, Walton surveys the sheets of ice surrounding his ship and backs out of his dangerous quest for the North Pole. He wants to be the explorer, but not to the degree that Victor is, with nothing but heartache to show for his efforts. This wisdom can only come through his encounter with Victor. Mary Shelley uses Walton as a frame narrator because only through his eyes can we see that Victor is really the monster, and that he allows himself to be because he stretches human knowledge further than it was meant to go.

Science vs. Nature

The Romantic period produced many naturalist writers who praised the beauty and the perfect system of nature over man-made substitutes. Mary Shelley's husband Percy and his colleague Lord Byron were such poets, and Mary found herself agreeing with them. As science began to make a foothold in their time, some writers ignored it while others railed against the change. What better way to protest the encroachment of science than to tell the story of a man whose science lurches out of control, producing two literal monsters?

Victor Frankenstein is symbolic of this "science gone mad," and he represents the new establishment that preferred test tubes to sonnets. The monster represents the results of this science – more amoral than immoral, not necessarily bad but dangerous to all around it. The monster roams through lakes and forests and grasslands to bring the contrast between science and nature into full focus – try as he might, the monster doesn't fit into these natural settings.

Mary Shelley's disdain for the "New Science" prompts us to think about similar issues in our own lives – is science for its own sake "good science," or is it "bad" if it disturbs a natural balance? What exactly is a natural balance, and what constitutes "science"? The novel raised these questions during the Romantic

period, and we are still trying to answer them today.

Language
Frankenstein itself is a “novel within a novel”; within this “inner novel” we see many other types of language - letters, notes, journals, inscriptions, and books whether physically present or alluded to, appear time and time again. Each document is an attempt to preserve a particular kind of language.

Walton’s language is that of the sea – bold, strong words that resist the flowery style of a great deal of prose of the period. His letters to his sister are relatively simple and straightforward, telling of his time on the sea and his time spent with Victor; it is almost as if he is speaking to her directly rather than writing.

Victor’s language, on the other hand, is expressed in his journals – mathematical formulas, charts and graphs, sketches of machines and fragments of sentences. His prose in his journals is more flowery than that of Walton’s letters, but Mary Shelley’s depiction of him as a madman scribbling scientific text is undeniable. We have a hard time feeling anything for Victor as he writes down the results of his experiments.

The monster has no language, and he must learn one for himself. He learns some from Victor, some from the townspeople who briefly befriend him, and some seems to come from within. At the end of the novel the monster uses his language to punish Victor, leaving messages cut into trees and rocks to taunt him. It is a language of anger and of grief, as incomplete as Walton’s is clear and Victor’s is superior. In the end the only language that survives to speak another day is Walton’s, again underscoring the idea that the simplest view of the world is often the best.

Multiple Personalities
It’s ironic that Mary Shelley’s husband Percy coined the term “Imitative Fallacy,” because Frankenstein could certainly be (and has been) accused of it. The novel itself has “multiple personalities,” and so does Victor Frankenstein. The differences between the “personalities” provide the novel’s greatest source of tension, dramatic and heightened for the sake of suspense.

Victor Frankenstein’s creation has often been characterized as his “dark side,” similar to Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, written almost 70 years later. The Frankenstein monster could be considered a model for Stevenson’s Mr. Hyde, the embodiment of all of Henry Jekyll’s less “proper” thoughts and actions. The monster is an untamed version of Victor’s ego, demanding and determined yet brutish and naïve. He expects things to go his way, and when they don’t, he responds with violence. The monster could even be called a manifestation of Victor’s “inner child.”

Victor’s split is reflected in the novel’s structure, which shifts from letters to journals to straight narration to what seems like intense first-person accounts. Victor is the narrator of record, but his observations are far too omniscient to be realistically his throughout the novel. Mary Shelley’s narrator actually shifts from perspective to perspective, using the best perspective and the best form (see “Language” above) to tell a particular part of the story.

Percy Shelley’s Imitative Fallacy warns against making a work of literature reflect its characters; Frankenstein looks this idea right in the eye and works, both reflecting the feelings of Victor and the other characters and providing a narrative that rises above their individual perceptions.

Style

Narration
Instead of beginning with Victor's point of view, Shelley introduces us to Walton first. Using a frame device,

in which the tale is told to us by someone who reads it or hears it from someone else, Shelley invites readers to believe Victor's story through an objective person. Shelley also uses an important literary device known as the epistolary form—where letters tell the story—using letters between Walton and his sister to frame both Victor's and the creature's narrative. Before the novel's first chapter, Walton writes to his sister about the "wretched man" he meets, building suspense about the "demon" Victor mentions at the beginning of his narrative. Once Victor begins telling his story, we slowly learn about his childhood and the eventful moments leading up to his studies at the University. Then, the creature interrupts Victor, and we get to hear all the significant moments leading up to his request for a partner. Since the theme of listening is so central to this novel, Shelley makes sure, by incorporating three different narratives, that readers get to hear all sides of the story. Walton's letters introduce and conclude the novel, reinforcing the theme of nurturing.

Setting

The majority of the novel takes place in the Swiss Alps and concludes in the Arctic, although Victor and Clerval travel to other places, such as London, England, the Rhine River which flows from Switzerland north to the Netherlands, and Scotland. All of these locations, except for the Arctic, were among the favorite landscapes for Romantic writers, and Shelley spends great care describing the sublime shapes of the majestic, snow-clad mountains. However, aside from the dark Arctic Ocean, Shelley's setting is unusual; most Gothic novels produce gloomy, haggard settings adorned with decaying mansions and ghostly, supernatural spirits. It is possible the author intended the beautiful Alps to serve as a contrast to the creature's unsightly physical appearance. In addition to the atypical Gothic setting, Shelley also sets her story in contemporary times, another diversion from Gothic novels which usually venture to the Middle Ages and other far away time periods. By using the time period of her day, Shelley makes the creature and the story's events much more realistic and lifelike.

Romanticism

Spanning the years between 1785 and 1830, the Romantic period was marked by the French Revolution and the beginnings of modern industrialism. Most of the early Romantic writers favored the revolution and the changes in lifestyle and sensibility which accompanied it. After shaking off old traditions and customs, writers experienced the newfound freedom of turning inward, rather than outward to the external world, to reflect on issues of the heart and the imagination. In addition, writers like English poet William Wordsworth suddenly challenged his predecessors by writing about natural scenes and rustic, commonplace lifestyles. English poet Samuel Coleridge explored elements of the supernatural in his poetry.

Mary Shelley combined the ethical concerns of her parents with the Romantic sensibilities of Percy Shelley's poetic inclinations. Her father's concern for the underprivileged influenced her description of the poverty-stricken De Lacey family. Her appeals to the imagination, isolation, and nature represented typical scenes and themes explored in some of Percy Shelley's poetry. But Mary's choice of a Gothic novel made her unique in her family and secured her authorial place in the Romantic period.

Gothicism

Horace Walpole introduced the first Gothic novel in 1764 with *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. Gothic novels were usually mysteries in which sinister and sometimes supernatural events occurred and were ultimately caused by some evil human action. The language was frequently overly dramatic and inflated. Following this movement was the Romantic movement's fascination with the macabre and the superstitious aspects of life, allowing them the freedom to explore the darkest depths of the human mind. Most critics agree that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflected her deepest psychological fears and insecurities, such as her inability to prevent her children's deaths, her distressed marriage to a man who showed no remorse for his daughters' deaths, and her feelings of inadequacy as a writer. The Gothic novel usually expresses, often in subtle and indirect ways, our repressed anxieties. The settings usually take place far away from reality or realistic portrayals of everyday life. Shelley's setting, of course, is the exception to most Gothic novels. The fact that the creature wanders the breathtaking Alps instead of a dark, craggy mansion in the middle of

nowhere either compounds the reader's fear or makes the creature more human.

Doppelganger
Many literary critics have noted the *Doppelganger* effect—the idea that a living person has a ghostly double haunting him—between Victor and his creature. Presenting Victor and the creature as doubles allows Shelley to dramatize two aspects of a character, usually the "good" and "bad" selves. Victor's desire to ignore his creature parallels his desire to disregard the darkest part of his self. The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud characterizes this "dark" side as the Id, while Carl Jung, another famous psychologist, refers to our "dark" side as the Jungian shadow. Jung claims that we all have characteristics we don't like about ourselves, yet these unsavory attributes stay with us like a shadow tailgating its leader. The creature represents Victor's "evil" shadow, just as Victor represents the creature's. When presented this way, it makes sense that so many readers confuse the creature and Victor by assuming that the creature is named Frankenstein. Both of these characters "alternately pursue and flee from one another . . . [L]ike fragments of a mind in conflict with itself," as Eleanor Ty observes in the *Concise Dictionary of British Literary Biography*. But taken together as one person, Victor and his creature combine to represent the full spectrum of what it means to be human—to be joyful, compassionate, empathetic, and hateful, and also love humanity, desire knowledge, honor justice, fear the unknown, dread abandonment, and fear mortality. No other character in the novel assumes this range of human complexity.

Historical Context

The French Revolution and the Rise of Industrialism
Most of the early Romantic waters strongly advocated the French Revolution, which began in 1789 with the storming of the Bastille, a prison where the French royalty kept political prisoners. The revolution signaled a throwing off of old traditions and customs of the wealthy classes, as the balance of economic power shifted toward the middle class with the rise of industrialism. As textile factories and iron mills increased production with advanced machinery and technology, the working classes grew restive and increasingly alarmed by jobs that seemed insecure because a worker could be replaced by machines. Most of England's literary thinkers welcomed revolution because it represented an opportunity to establish a harmonious social structure. Shelley's father William Godwin, in fact, strongly influenced Romantic writers when he wrote *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* because he envisioned a society in which property would be equally distributed. Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft, also an ardent supporter of the revolution, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in response to Edmund Burke's attack on the revolution. She followed two years later with *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, supporting equality between the sexes.

Mary Shelley's first drawing of Frankenstein's monster.

The bloody "September Massacres" in which French revolutionaries executed nearly 1200 priests, royalists, aristocrats, and common criminals, occurred in 1792. This event and the "Reign of Terror," during which the revolutionary government imprisoned over 300,000 "suspects," made English sympathizers lose their fervor. With the rise of Napoleon, who was crowned emperor in 1804, England itself was drawn into war against France during this time. After the war ended in 1815, the English turned their attention to economic and social problems plaguing their own country. Much of the reason why England did not regulate the economic shift from a farming-based society to an industrialized society stemmed from a hands-off philosophy of non-governmental interference with private business. This philosophy had profound effects, leading to extremely low wages and terrible working conditions for employees who were prevented by law from unionizing.

Science and Technology

Eventually, the working class protested their conditions with violent measures. Around 1811, a period of unemployment, low wages, and high prices led to the Luddite Movement. This movement encouraged people to sabotage the technology and machinery that took jobs away from workers. Because the new machines produced an unparalleled production rate, competition for jobs was fierce, and employers used the low employment rate against their workers by not providing decent wages or working conditions. In addition to technological advances and new machines such as the steam engine, scientific advancements influenced the Romantic period. The most significant scientist was Erasmus Darwin, a noted physician, poet, and scholar whose ideas concerning biological evolution prefigured those of his more famous grandson, Charles Darwin. Both Mary and Percy were very familiar with his description of biological evolution, which became one of the central topics at the poet Lord Byron's home when Shelley conceived her idea for *Frankenstein*. Percy and Mary also attended a lecture by Andrew Crosse, a British scientist whose experiments with electricity bore some resemblance to Frankenstein's fascinations. Crosse discussed galvanism, or the study of electricity and its applications. This lecture no doubt fueled Shelley's imagination enough for her to suggest Victor Frankenstein's step-by-step invention of the creature in her novel.

Arctic Exploration
The late 1700s also marked the beginnings of a new era of ocean exploration. England's Royal Academy, which promoted the first voyage to the South seas, appealed to scientists and travelers alike. Explorers eventually wanted to find a trade route through the Arctic that would connect the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. In 1818, the year that Shelley published *Frankenstein*, a Scottish explorer named John Ross went searching for the Northwest passage and discovered an eight mile expanse of red-colored snow cliffs overlooking Baffin Bay, between Greenland and Canada. His journey reflected Walton's quest to the North pole and the era of discovery in which Shelley lived.

Critical Overview

When Mary finished her novel in May 1817, Percy Shelley sent her manuscript, under an anonymous name, to two different publishers, both of whom rejected it. Lakington, Allen, and Co. finally accepted it. Early reviews of the work were generally mixed. As quoted in Diane Johnson's introduction to the novel, a critic for *The Edinburgh Review* found that "taste and judgement [sic] alike revolted at this kind of writing," and "it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manner of morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers unless their tastes have been deplorably vitiated." A writer from the *Monthly Review*, as quoted by Montague Summers in *The Gothic Quest*, claimed that the setting was so improbable—the story so unbelievable—that it was "an uncouth story . . . leading to no conclusion either moral or philosophical." Even though this conclusion regarding the novel's lack of moral implications seems absurd to readers today, most of the earliest unfavorable reviews related to the story's grotesque or sensationalist elements. On the other hand, some early reviewers enjoyed the novel's uniqueness and praised the author's genius. As Johnson related Sir Walter Scott stated in *Blackwood's Edinburgh* magazine that he was impressed with "the high idea of the author's original genius and happy power of expression." The rest of England seemed to agree with Scott's opinion, since so many readers enjoyed *Frankenstein*. The novel resembled many works of the popular gothic genre, but it also became one of the triumphs of the Romantic movement. People identified with its themes of alienation and isolation and its warning about the destructive power that can result when human creativity is unfettered by moral and social concerns. Even if readers did not identify the Romantic themes present in Shelley's novel, the sensationalist elements piqued interest in other forms of dramatization.

In 1823, the English Opera House performed *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*, and fourteen other dramatizations were staged within three years of the play's premiere. The Opera House, in fact, used the protests against this play to further its own interests. As Steven Forry notes in his book *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, public outrage regarding the "immoral tendency" heightened the appeal of both the play and the book. Eventually, the various dramatizations shaped Shelley's characters to fit whatever popular appeal would draw audiences to the playhouses. (©eNotes) Even today, numerous film adaptations distort the novel's original story, especially concerning the creature's very complex response to his world.

Since the 1800s, *Frankenstein* has continued to appeal to a wide audience. Criticism of the novel represents a diverse range of approaches. These include feminist interpretations, which describe the novel as reflecting Shelley's deepest fears of motherhood. Marxist analyses explore the effects of the poor versus the bourgeois families (the De Lacey's versus the Frankenstein's). In addition, some critics have focused on psychoanalysis, interpreting Dr. Frankenstein and the monster as embodying Sigmund Freud's theory of id and ego. Today, much critical focus seems to rest on the autobiographical elements of *Frankenstein*, as critics wish to rightfully consider Shelley as one of the leading Romantic writers of her day.

Character Analysis

Victor Frankenstein

Victor Frankenstein
There is a reason Shelley's novel was named for its main character – Victor is the embodiment of the duality of human life, at least to Mary Shelley. A native of Geneva, Switzerland, he grows up reading ancient alchemy texts and, we can assume, fantasizing of a life of the magic of the old sciences. By the time he reaches the university at Ingolstadt, the ideas he grew up with are useless, even detrimental, to the practice of then-modern day science. Shelley uses Victor here as a symbol of the new replacing the old – there are times when the new "forgets" lessons taught by the old.

In his time at the university, Victor adapts to the ideas of modern science and learns all his professors have to teach him quickly. With old and new ideas combined, he becomes fascinated with the "secret of life," determined to discover it and create life to prove the old masters right using new methods. Victor stumbles upon a way, and even though it involves grave robbing he is willing to break the law for the sake of his version of science. Mary Shelley seems to show her skepticism through Victor as he digests the new ways while all the time concealing his love for the mystical, a love that finally leads to his greatest triumph and his worst nightmare.

Victor's methods finally create life, but not the way he planned – his vision of a race of supermen shatters when he sees the ragtag, angry creature he has created, and he immediately disowns the creature. When the monster proceeds to kill Victor's youngest brother, his best friend, and even his wife, he refuses to admit that his experiments resulted in failure. The creature indirectly causes the deaths of two other innocent victims, including Victor's father, but still Victor struggles with himself. He is torn apart with guilt, responsibility, and fear of his own creation, but he can't acknowledge the horror of what he has created, even as he loses one part of his life after another to the result of his "science" running wild.

Victor begins the novel as an innocent youth fascinated by the prospects of science; by the end he is bitter, disillusioned, and guilt-ridden. Finally seeing the monster for what it is, he is determined to destroy the twisted life he has created. Through Victor, Mary Shelley shows us man's desire to be God, and perhaps a fear that the new scientific advances of her age would eventually allow something like Frankenstein's experiment to work. As a result, Victor verges on inhuman – he doesn't seem to have "normal" emotional reactions to any of the events in his life. He cuts himself off from the world, eventually devoting the remainder of his life to one obsession: Destroying the monster he created.

At the end of the novel, having chased the monster as far as the North Pole, Victor tells Robert Walton his story and dies. Walton, the story's "narrator," leaves us with different interpretations of Victor, all leading to the same conclusion – the classic "mad scientist" breaking all known rules and laws to gain the object of his experimentation, unconcerned about the consequences for anyone who gets in his way. If he has to travel to the ends of the Earth (and he literally does, in a sense), Victor will have what he wants, even though he is not entirely certain what that may be.

The Monster

The Monster
The monster is the secondary focus in Frankenstein; after all, he is the result of Victor's perverse view of science, and of life. Literally sewn together from old body parts and animated by arcane chemicals and what must be lightning, he enters life and the novel a hulking, eight feet tall newborn baby. His "father's" first act

is to disown and abandon him – is it any wonder he goes on a rampage? Mary Shelley seems to be using the Monster as both a product of modern science's refusal to accept the natural world and as Victor's "dark side." It is as if the emotion Victor doesn't seem to have has been transferred into the Monster, who has no idea how to deal with it.

He tries to join regular society, only to be rejected. He looks in a mirror and realizes he is ugly, a parody of a human being. Despite his naturally gentle, even loving nature, the Monster's separation from humanity drives his growing rage toward the man who created him then left him to fend for himself in a world that has no place for him. Seeking revenge on his creator, he kills Victor's brother and demands that Victor create a woman like him so he won't be alone. Victor double-crosses the monster, destroying his work on the female monster, and the Monster kills Victor's best friend, then his new wife, in return.

Shelley wants us to feel sympathy for the Monster – she seems to be saying that Victor is the true monster of the novel – and she does so by giving him a gentle, eloquent nature. He assists a group of poor peasants and saves a girl from drowning, but because of his outward appearance, he is rewarded only with beatings and disgust. Torn between revenge and his natural impulses, the monster is destined to be lonely and guilty over the deaths he has caused.

Even Victor's death is a hollow victory; although the source of the Monster's suffering is gone, he was truly the creature's only connection to real life. Without his "father" to guide him, the monster trudges off into the snow and ice, presumably never to be seen again.

Robert Walton

Robert Walton
Frankenstein is a *frame narrative* – the story or stories told exist within a kind of "main story." Robert Walton's letters to his sister are the frame around which the novel is based. Walton captains a North Pole-bound ship trapped in ice. While waiting for the ice to thaw, he and his crew pick up Victor, weak and withered from his journey of revenge. Victor recovers enough to tell Walton the story of his life, then dies when his story is finished. Walton had felt that he and Victor were beginning a genuine friendship, and he mourns the loss of this man he barely knew, whose life was such a mess.

Walton is more than just a convenient frame for the story of Victor Frankenstein; he is also a parallel to Victor in a way. Like Victor, Walton is an explorer, chasing after the unknown. Victor's influence on him causes him to at times cheer his newfound friend's boldness and his journey, at other times to feel sorrow and fear at Victor's abuse of both science and nature. In the end, he knows that Victor's journey is not his, and wisely lets the monster go. Through Victor, Walton has learned his lesson.

Essays and Criticism

In the Context of the Romantic Era

Perhaps no book is more of its age than *Frankenstein*. Written and published in 1816-1818, *Frankenstein* typifies the most important ideas of the Romantic era, among them the primacy of feelings, the dangers of intellect, dismay over the human capacity to corrupt our natural goodness, the agony of the questing, solitary hero, and the awesome power of the sublime. Its Gothic fascination with the dual nature of humans and with the figurative power of dreams anticipates the end of the nineteenth century and the discovery of the unconscious and the dream life. The story of its creation, which the author herself tells in a "Preface" to the third edition to the book (1831), is equally illuminating about its age. At nineteen, Mary Godwin was living in

the summer of 1816 with the poet Percy Shelley, visiting another famous Romantic poet, Lord Byron, and his doctor at Byron's Swiss villa when cold, wet weather drove them all indoors. Byron proposed that they entertain themselves by writing, each of them, a ghost story. On an evening when Byron and Shelley had been talking about galvanism and human life, whether an electric current could be passed through tissue to animate it Mary Shelley went to bed and in a half-dream state thought of the idea for *Frankenstein*. She awoke from the nightmarish vision of a "pale student of unhallowed arts" terrified by the "yellow, watery . . . eyes" of his creation staring at him to stare herself at the moon outside rising over the Alps. The next morning she wrote the first sentence of chapter five: "It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils." With Percy Shelley's encouragement and in spite of a failed childbirth and the suicide of a half-sister, over the next several months she worked on the story. It was completed in 1817 and published the following year, the only successful "ghost" story of that evening, perhaps the most widely known ever written.

Shelley's was an age in which heart triumphed over head. Frankenstein's moral failure is his heedless pursuit to know all that he might about life without taking any responsibility for his acts. His "sin" is not solely in creating the monster, but in abandoning him to orphanhood at his birth. The monster's unnatural birth is the product of what the Romantic poet Wordsworth called humankind's "meddling intellect." Childlike in his innocence, the monster wants only to be loved, but he gets love from neither his "father" nor from any other in the human community.

Behind the novel's indictment of the intellect stand three important myths to which Shelley alludes. She subtitles her book "A Modern Prometheus," linking Victor Frankenstein to the heroic but ultimately tragic figure of Greek myth who contended with the gods, stole fire from them to give to humans, and was punished by Zeus by being chained on Mount Caucasus to have vultures eat his liver. Her husband Percy Shelley wrote a closet drama, Prometheus Unbound, and fellow Romantic poets Byron and Coleridge were also attracted to and wrote about a figure of defiant ambition. The story of Faust, like the Prometheus myth, also involves one who would trade everything to satisfy an aggressive and acquisitive intellect. Finally, Adam's fall from grace came of his eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. All are unhappy with the limits life places on them; all challenge those limits; all suffer great loss. Such is Victor Frankenstein's story, one which Walton appears about to replicate on his journey to the Pole. Walton tells Frankenstein,

> "I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race."

Frankenstein, to whom "life and death appeared . . . ideal bounds" to be broken through, succeeds in his intellectual pursuit but at great cost. He loses friend, brother, and wife. He loses all contact and sympathy with the human community. At both the beginning and end of the novel, he is the most alienated figure, alone, in mad pursuit in a desolate spot on the earth.

The novel's structure enhances these ideas. It is a framed narrative with a story within a story within a story. At the outer layer the novel is framed by the letters which Walton writes to his sister while he is voyaging to the Pole, a Frankenstein-like figure consumed by an intellectual ambition, heedless of feeling, alienated and unbefriended. His drama is internal, his isolation all the more clear in the one-way communication the letters afford. The next layer is Frankenstein's story, told because he has the opportunity before his death to deter one like himself from the same tragic consequences. Finally, although the novel is titled *Frankenstein*, the monster is at its structural center, his voice the most compelling because the most felt. Perhaps not co-incidentally, in the popular imagination, the word "Frankenstein" conjures in most minds not Victor but the monster, although popular treatments of the story on stage and film have half-misconstrued Shelley's purpose by focusing only on the monster as a terrible being.

That the monster begs for our pity, that he descends from his native-born goodness to become a "malignant devil," illustrates another notion familiar to Shelley generally in her age and particularly in her family. Her father, William Godwin, had written *Political Justice* (1793) and her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had written A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), both works on social injustices. These leading philosophical radicals of the day believed that, as Rousseau put it, "Man is born free and is everywhere in chains," that in our civilizations we corrupt what is by nature innocent. The monster is not evil, he is transformed into evil by a human injustice, an Adam made into a Satan. "I was benevolent and good," he says; "misery made me a fiend." The DeLaceys, unjustly expelled from society, represent the possibility of our restoration to native goodness in retreat from society amid the sublime splendors of the Alps. Old Mr. DeLacey tells the Monster that "the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity." The monster sees in the DeLaceys the loving family he has never known and their simple cottage life is a model of the happily primitive which the Romantics idealized.

If *Frankenstein* is a book of its age, it also looks ahead to its century's end when interest in the human psyche uncovered the unconscious mind. The idea of the Doppleganger, the double who shadows us, had been around since the origins of the Gothic novel in the 1760s. By the end of the nineteenth century, works such as Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* made the idea that we had more than one self common. Capable of both great good and evil, we had, it seemed, a "monster" always potentially within us and not always under our control. Freud's splitting of the psyche put the monster-like id at the core of our persons. Freudian readings of *Frankenstein* see the monster as the outward expression of Victor's id or his demoniacal passions. In other words, Victor and the monster are the same person. Hence, Victor must keep the monster secret. His hope to create a being "like myself" is fulfilled in the monster whose murders we must see as expressions of Victor's own desires. Victor calls himself "the true murderer" of lustine, who, along with his brother William, he labels "the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts." Driven by remorse, he wanders "like an evil spirit," his own wandering a mirror image of the monster's. When we see both in the outer frame of the book, Victor pursues the monster, but it is the monster who has pursued Victor, whom he calls "my last victim." Since Victor's story is a story of creation, murder, investigation, and pursuit, *Frankenstein* is ultimately a book about our pursuit of self-discovery, about the knowledge of the monster within us.

Devices conventional in both gothic novels and novels of more modern psychological interest appear in *Frankenstein*. Victor's passions frequently induce lapses in consciousness; his nightmares beg for interpretation. The most powerful occurs at one in the morning on the evening he succeeds in animating the corpse. He dreams that he sees Elizabeth walking the streets of Ingolstadt "in the bloom of health," but when he kisses her, she appears deathlike and is transformed into the corpse of his dead mother. When he awakens from the horror of his sleep, his monstrous creation looms over him. Frankenstein flees. Victor creates a monster and the nightmare hints that the monster of his desire is to take Elizabeth's life, perhaps because, as some suggest, unconsciously he holds her responsible for his mother's death.

The implications of the perverse in the sexual relationships of the characters also seem well served by a Freudian reading. Frankenstein is the monster's "father," yet were he to agree to the monster's demand to create for him a bride, would his next offspring be a "sister"? That hint of the incestuous is echoed in Victor's marriage to Elizabeth. An orphan brought home by Mrs. Frankenstein, she seems to the young Victor his possession, and though they "called each other familiarly by the name of cousin," Victor acknowledges that the ambiguity of their relationship defied naming. "No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me—my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only." The monster's threat—"I shall be with you on your wedding night"—puts the monster in the nuptial bed with his "father" and his father's "sister/bride." That the novel closes with the monster's killing of the "father" pleads for an Oedipal reading which Freud's arguments regarding infantile sexuality and the competition within the birth family for the love of the mother made possible.

Numerous psychological readings of the novel have focused on Mary Shelley's life. Ellen Moers proposed that in *Frankenstein* Shelley wrestled with the pain of birth. Her own mother died only days after she was born, and Mary's firstborn died the year before she began the novel. Later, she referred to the book as "my hideous progeny." More recent feminist interpretations, such as that by Gilbert and Gubar noting that the novel is about a motherless orphan, similarly point to Mary's youth and remind us that books and children and birth and death are so mixed in both Shelley's life and in the novel that one cannot be understood without the other.

Frankenstein shocked readers in 1818 for its monstrous impiety, but its fame seemed fixed at birth. Initial reviews, politically oriented, denounced the book as a bit of radical Godwinism, since the book was dedicated to William Godwin and many presumed that its anonymous author was Percy Shelley. A stage adaptation called *Presumption, or, The Fate of Frankenstein* appeared as early as 1823. Mary Shelley attended a performance. In Shelley's life two additional editions were published; numerous editions since then have appeared. Burlesques on stage began in the late 1840s and continued to the end of the century. Thomas Edison created a film version as early as 1910, followed by the most famous film version, in 1931, starring Boris Karloff. It fixed for several generations an idea of "the monster Frankenstein," which gave birth to numerous other films and parodies of the story which continue to the present. In film, in translation into many of the world's languages, in its presence in school curricula, and in an unending body of criticism, *Frankenstein* lives well beyond its young author's modest intentions to write an entertaining Gothic tale to pass some time indoors on a cold Swiss summer evening.

Source: George V. Griffith, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 1997. Griffith is a professor of English and philosophy at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska.

Frankenstein's Fallen Angel

Quite apart from its enduring celebrity, and its proliferation in numberless extraliterary forms, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus is a remarkable work A novel *sui generis*, if a novel at all, it is a unique blending of Gothic, fabulist, allegorical, and philosophical materials. Though certainly one of the most calculated and *willed* of fantasies, being in large part a kind of gloss upon or rejoinder to John Milton's *Paradise Lost, Frankenstein* is fueled by the kind of grotesque, faintly absurd, and wildly inventive images that spring direct from the unconscious: the eight-foot creature designed to be "beautiful," who turns out almost indescribably repulsive (yellow-skinned, shriveled of countenance, with straight black lips and near-colorless eyes); the cherished cousin-bride who is beautiful but, in the mind's dreaming, yields horrors ("As I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death, her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds"); the mad dream of the Arctic as a country of "eternal light" that will prove, of course, only a place of endless ice, the appropriate landscape for Victor Frankenstein's death and his demon's self-immolation.

Central to *Frankenstein*—as it is central to a vastly different nineteenth-century romance, Jane Eyre—is a stroke of lightning that appears to issue in a dazzling "stream of fire" from a beautiful old oak tree ("So soon the light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump"): the literal stimulus for Frankenstein's subsequent discovery of the cause of generation and life. And according to Mary Shelley's prefatory account of the origin of her "ghost story," the very image of Frankenstein and his demon-creature sprang from a waking dream of extraordinary vividness:

> I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bound of revene. I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision—I saw the pale student of

> unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. . . . The student sleeps: but he is awakened; he opens his eyes, behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

Hallucinatory and surrealist on its deepest level, *Frankenstein* is of course one of the most self-consciously literary "novels" ever written: its awkward form is the epistolary Gothic; its lyric descriptions of natural scenes (the grandiose Valley of Chamoumx in particular) spring from Romantic sources; its speeches and monologues echo both Shakespeare and Milton; and, should the author's didactic intention not be clear enough, the demon-creature educates himself by studying three books of symbolic significance-Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, Plutarch's Lives, and Milton's Paradise Lost. (The last conveniently supplies him with a sense of his own predicament, as Mary Shelley hopes to dramatize it. He reads Milton's great epic as if it were a "true history" giving the picture of an omnipotent God warring with His creatures; he identifies himself with Adam, except so far as Adam had come forth from God a "perfect creature, happy and prosperous." Finally, of course, he identifies with Satan: "I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.")

The search of medieval alchemists for the legendary philosophers' stone (the talismanic process by which base metals might be transformed into gold or, in psychological terms, the means by which the individual might realize his destiny), Faust's reckless defiance of human limitations and his willingness to barter his soul for knowledge, the fatal search of such tragic figures as Oedipus and Hamlet for answers to the mysteries of their lives—these are the archetypal dramas to which *Frankenstein* bears an obvious kinship. Yet, as one reads, as Frankenstein and his despised shadow-self engage in one after another of the novel's many dialogues, it begins to seem as if the nineteen-year-old author is discovering these archetypal elements for the first time. Frankenstein "is" a demonic parody (or extension) of Milton's God; he "is" *Prometheus plasticator*, the creator of mankind; but at the same time, by his own account, he is totally unable to control the behavior of his demon (variously called "monster," "fiend," "wretch," but necessarily lacking a name). Surprisingly, it is not by way of the priggish and "self-devoted" young scientist that Mary Shelley discovers the great power of her narrative but by way of the misshapen demon, with whom most readers identify: "My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" It is not simply the case that the demon—like Satan and Adam in Paradise Lost—has the most compelling speeches in the novel and is far wiser and magnanimous than his creator: he is also the means by which a transcendent love—a romantically *unrequited love*—is expressed. Surely one of the secrets of *Frankenstein*, which helps to account for its abiding appeal, is the demon's patient, unquestioning, utterly faithful, and utterly *human* love for his irresponsible creator.

When Frankenstein is tracking the demon into the Arctic regions, for instance, it is clearly the demon who is helping him in his search, and even leaving food for him; but Frankenstein is so blind-in fact so comically blind—he believes that "spirits" are responsible. "Yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps, and, when I most murmured, would suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Sometimes, when nature, overcome by hunger, sunk under the exhaustion, a repast was prepared for me in the desert, that restored and inspirited me. . . . I may not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me."

By degrees, with the progression of the fable's unlikely plot, the inhuman creation becomes increasingly human while his creator becomes increasingly inhuman, frozen in a posture of rigorous denial. (He is blameless of any wrongdoing in terms of the demon and even dares to tell Walton, literally with his dying breath, that another scientist might succeed where he had failed!—the lesson of the "Frankenstein monster" is

revealed as totally lost on Frankenstein himself.) The demon is (sub)human consciousness-in-the-making, naturally, benevolent as Milton's Satan is not, and received with horror and contempt solely because of his physical appearance. He is sired without a mother in defiance of nature, but he is in one sense an infant—a comically monstrous eight-foot baby— whose progenitor rejects him immediately after creating him, in one of the most curious (and dreamlike) scenes in the novel:

> "How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom, with such infinite pains and care, I had endeavored to form? I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep."

Here follows the nightmare vision of Frankenstein's bride-to-be, Elizabeth, as a form of his dead mother, with "grave-worms crawling" in her shroud; and shortly afterward the "wretch" himself appears at Frankenstein's bed, drawing away the canopy as Mary Shelley had imagined. But Frankenstein is so cowardly he runs away again; and this time the demon is indeed abandoned, to reappear only after the first of the "murders" of Frankenstein's kin. On the surface, Frankenstein's behavior is preposterous, even idiotic, for he seems blind to the fact that is apparent to any reader—that he has loosed a fearful power into the world, whether it strikes his eye as aesthetically pleasing or not, and he *must* take responsibility for it. Except, of course, he does not. For, as he keeps telling himself, he is blameless of any wrongdoing apart from the act of creation itself. The emotions he catalogs for us-gloom, sorrow, misery, despair-are conventionally Romantic attitudes, mere luxuries in a context that requires *action* and not simply *response*.

By contrast the demon is all activity, all yearning, all hope. His love for his maker is unrequited and seems incapable of making any impression upon Frankenstein; yet the demon never gives it up, even when he sounds most threatening: "Beware," says the demon midway in the novel, "for I am fearless, and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict." His voice is very like his creator's—indeed, everyone in *Frankenstein* sounds alike—but his posture is always one of simple need: he requires love in order to become less monstrous, but, as he is a monster, love is denied him; and the man responsible for this comically tragic state of affairs says repeatedly that he is not to blame. Frankenstein's typical response to the situation is: "I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. I was guiltless, but I had indeed drawn a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime." But if Frankenstein is not to blame for the various deaths that occur, who is? Had he endowed his creation, as God endowed Adam in Milton's epic, with free will? Or is the demon psychologically his creature, committing the forbidden acts Frankenstein wants committed?—so long as Frankenstein himself remains "guiltless."

It is a measure of the subtlety of this moral parable that the demon strikes so many archetypal chords and suggests so many variant readings. He recapitulates in truncated form the history of consciousness of his race (learning to speak, react, write, etc., by closely watching the De Lacey family); he is an abandoned child, a parentless orphan; he takes on the voices of Adam, Satan ("Evil thenceforth became my good," he says, as Milton's fallen angel says, "Evil be thou my good"), even our "first mother," Eve. When the demon terrifies himself by seeing his reflection in a pool, and grasping at once the nature of his own deformity, he is surely not mirroring Narcissus, as some commentators have suggested, but Milton's Eve in her surprised discovery of her own beauty, in book 4 of Paradise Lost:

> I thither went
> With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
> On the green bank, to look into the clear

> Smooth Lake, that to me seemed another Sky.
> As I bent down to look, just opposite,
> A Shape within the watery gleam appeared
> Bending to look on me: I started back,
> It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
> Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathy and love: there I had fixed
> Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire [ll 455-66]

He is Shakespeare's Edmund, though unloved--a shadow figure more tragic, because more "conscious," than the hero he represents. Most suggestively, he has become by the novel's melodramatic conclusion a form of Christ: sinned against by all humankind, yet fundamentally blameless, and yet quite willing to die as a sacrifice. He speaks of his death as a "consummation"; he is going to burn himself on a funeral pyre somewhere in the Arctic wastes—unlikely, certainly, but a fitting end to a life conceived by way of lightning and electricity:

> "But soon," he cried with sad and solemn enthusiasm, "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or, if it thinks, it will not surely think thus."

But the demon does not die within the confines of the novel, so perhaps he has not died after all. He is, in the end, a "modern" species of shadow or *Doppelganger—the nightmare that is deliberately created by man's ingenuity* and not a mere supernatural being or fairy-tale remnant.

Source: Joyce Carol Oates "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel," in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 10, No. 3, March, 1984, pp. 543-54. Oates is a noted American novelist, educator, and critic.

The Noble Savage in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

The estimate of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* familiar to us from literary handbooks and popular impression emphasizes its macabre and pseudo-scientific sensationalism: properly enough, so far as either its primary conception or realized qualities are concerned. But it has the effect of obscuring from notice certain secondary aspects of the work which did, after all, figure in its history and weigh with its contemporary audience, and which must, therefore, be taken into consideration before either the book or the young mind that composed it has been properly assayed. One such minor strain, not too well recognised in criticism, is a thin vein of social speculation: a stereotyped, irrelevant, and apparently automatic repetition of the lessons of that school of liberal thought which was then termed "philosophical".

In the work of Godwin's daughter and Shelley's bride, some reflection of contemporary social radicalism—crude, second-hand, very earnest, already a little out of date—occurs almost as a matter of course; what deserves comment is just that this element entered the author's notion of her plot so late and remained so decidedly an alien in it; for it governs the story only temporarily and, so to speak, extraneously, and confuses as much as it promotes the development of the character of the central figure, the monster itself. Where one might have expected, from Mary's character, that it would prove a main *motif* of the narrative, it is actually both detrimental thereto and ill-assimilated, and must be discarded altogether before the story can advance to its principal effect.

For, throughout a considerable part of the book—roughly speaking, the first half of the middle section, beginning with chapter xi—the monster is so far from being the moral horror he presently becomes that it is hardly credible he should ever be guilty of wanton brutality at all. (The transformation, by the way, is effected most abruptly, without even the degree of psychological consistency appropriate to fantasy; two violent rebuffs and an astonishingly rigid logicality of temperament turn the monster from his lonely and contemplative benevolence to a course of harsh, melodramatic vengefulness.) Rather, in the solitary student of Volney, musing on the pageant of human history, or on the contrast between man's accomplishments and his failures—"Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?"—it is not hard to recognise that gentle layfigure of late eighteenth century social criticism, the "natural man," bringing his innocence into forceful and oversimplified contrast with the complexities and contradictions of our civilisation. Or, more precisely, may we not see in him (because of his strange origin and untutored state) something approximating to that variation of the general "child of nature" pattern to which Professor Fairchild has attached the name of Noble Savage? Like the savage, the monster approaches our society as an outsider, tests it by natural impulse and unsophisticated reason, and responds to it with a mixture of bewilderment and dismay.

Now, this aspect of the monster's character is basically unnecessary to the horror-plot; he need not pass by this road to ferocity and misery. (There might, for instance, as easily have been an original moral flaw in his constitution, paralleling the physical one; he might, as in the vulgar imagination, have been *created* bestial.) Indeed, the more this phase of his development is dwelt upon, the less consistent with the later stages does it appear. Nor is his experience as a Noble Savage too closely integrated into the story; it is connected rather arbitrarily to his education in language, but the social reflections, as well as the narrative which is their more immediate occasion, are pure interpolation, and lead to nothing. This is a real flaw in the story, felt by the reader as expectation disappointed; the author fails to *make use* of all her speculative preparation. When, for instance, the monster is hurt— brutally attacked—by those he trusted, it is because of their human ignorance and natural terror, not society's injustice; so that his radical observations are irrelevant to his own fate. Before long, indeed, the author is able to forget that the monster was ever a "natural man" (and consequently gentle and just by inclination) at all, without apparent loss to the dramatic values of the story. Everything points to the whole idea's having been an afterthought, arising, perhaps, before the full detail of the book had been worked out, but well after the general mood and drift and structure of the plot had been decided. The chance for it was offered by the story, and Mary Shelley could not decline it, but it was not an essential part of her idea, and could only be fitted in as a disproportioned and almost pointless interpolation.

The temptation seems to have been offered by the problem of the monster's intellectual development. The effort to make her creature psychologically credible must have troubled Mrs. Shelley most in his early days. What the difficulty was appears as one writes of it; how is one to speak of the "youth," the "childhood," of a being that appeared upon the earth full-grown, and yet how else is one to speak of his period of elementary ignorance and basic learning? The author cannot allow him the normal protracted human infancy and gradual education, for the plot demands that he escape from his creator and fend for himself at once; yet both plot and probability demand that he escape unformed, that he be confused and ignorant in the world into which he has blundered. As a result, the author bestows upon him a curious apprenticeship (to call it that), an amalgam of two quite different rates of development- for he is at the same time both child and man, and learns alternately like each. Thus he can walk and clothe himself from the moment of his creation, yet, infant-like, has trouble for a long while in separating the effects of the various senses; he learns the use of fire (by strict inductive reasoning!) in a few minutes, yet it is years before he can teach himself to speak or read. For the most part, however, his story is that of an adult in the state of nature, with faculties full-grown but almost literally without experience, and therefore making the acquaintance of the most primitive social facts by toilsome and unguided individual endeavour. If one distinguishes the difficulties (possible to an adult) of ignorance from those (peculiar to a child) of incapacity, there is really only a single effort to make him behave like one new-born— the confusion of the senses; thereafter he is a full-grown and decidedly intelligent but extraordinarily inexperienced man.

Now this comes close to being a description of the Noble Savage: an adult, but an alien to our world. If at this point (that is, chapters xi through xv) he differs markedly from the average of the type, it is only in being not an average but an extreme; the actual savage has his own commendable if elementary civilisation that he can compare with ours, but Frankenstein's monster has only the impulses of his nature—which are, to start with, absolutely good. But this mixture of innocence with ignorance was the very point to be exhibited by the Noble Savage or the "natural man"—"man as he is not"—both forms familiar to tediousness in the literature upon which early nineteenth century ingenuous radicalism fed its mind. So that, having brought her monster, untutored and uncorrupted, into the wilderness, there to spy upon and so study civilised ways (all of which was demanded anyhow by the plot), Mrs. Shelley would have found it hard not to fall into what must have been a very familiar habit of thought. She must surely have recognised that she was straying from the plotted path, whether she identified the new influence or not; but she was trying to write a full-length novel on the basis of a rather slim idea, and in those days interpolation was not yet a sin. So, not deliberately and yet not unwillingly, she permitted the assimilation of her story and her creature into the well-worn patterns they had skirted; none the less gratefully, perhaps, because they gave the young rebel an opportunity to utter a little of what was seething in her environment—the Shelley atmosphere, crossed by Byron's sulphureous trail—and in her own eager mind.

But if the temptation was strong enough to attract her into a rather long and somewhat incongruous philosophical digression, it was still subsidiary to her initial impulse. If Godwin's daughter could not help philosophising, Shelley's wife knew also the eerie charms of the morbid, the occult, the scientifically bizarre. Her first purpose, which was melodrama, stood. Therefore the alien figure appears in the novel only momentarily—so long as; with a little effort, the plot accommodates itself to him; when he really threatens to interfere with it, he is abandoned. But if he never dominates the story, he does figure in it, and should be reckoned with. However relentlessly the first lurid vision is finally pursued to its end, the familiar lineaments of the Noble Savage, the child of nature, did come for a little while to be visible in Frankenstein's impious creation; however sharply his hideous features and terrible career may have distinguished him from the brooding islander or haughty Indian sachem, the central theme, the uncongeniality of our actual world with a certain ideal and touchingly beautiful simplicity, served to associate his history, in some degree, with theirs, and so attract him temporarily into their form.

Source: Milton Millhauser, "The Noble Savage in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," in *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 190, No. 12, June 15, 1946, pp. 248-50.

Suggested Essay Topics

Volume One: Letters One through Four
1. Why do you think Robert Walton is so eager to visit such a hostile environment?

2. Discuss the similarities between Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein, the man he rescues. Why does Walton feel such compassion for Victor, a total stranger?

3. Why is Walton so impressed with the shipmaster’s actions regarding his fiancée?

4. What Romantic concepts do the characters of Victor and Walton illustrate?

Volume One: Chapters One and Two
1. Victor is deeply affected by Caroline’s death. Discuss Victor’s reaction to his mother’s death and the influence it has on his scientific studies.

2. Discuss Victor’s friendship with Henry Clerval and compare it to his father’s relationship with Beaufort.

3. What is “modern science” as explained by M. Waldman, and how does it differ from the theories of Agrippa and the other scientists Victor studies?

Volume One: Chapters Three, Four, and Five
1. Why do you think Victor created such a horrible-looking creature? Did he realize what he was doing? Explain your answer.

2. What are some of the characteristics of the Gothic novel, and how does Mary Shelley use them in these chapters?

3. Victor tells us that his friend Clerval’s imagination was “too vivid for the minutiae of science.” What does he mean by this?

Volume One: Chapters Six and Seven
1. After Justine is accused of William’s murder, why do you think Victor never tells anyone about the creature?

2. Explain why Justine confesses to the crime, even though she is innocent.

3. Discuss Victor’s experience with lightning and Shelley’s use of it when Victor sees the creature.

Volume Two: Chapters One and Two
1. The creature tells Frankenstein: “misery made me a fiend.” Do you think the creature’s unhappiness justifies his murderous behavior? Explain your answer using examples from the text.

2. Victor contemplates suicide while sailing on the lake, and again when climbing the mountain. Discuss the change in Victor’s personality from his university days.

Volume Two: Chapters Three, Four, and Five
1. Describe the creature’s feelings towards Victor when he first came to life. How do they differ from Victor’s first reaction to his creation?

2. Discuss the creature’s attitude towards knowledge. Why does learning new things excite him and at the same time cause him so much pain?

3. Explain how the creature feels towards the peasant family. Why do you think he is so moved by their gentleness and kindness?

Volume Two: Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine
1. Discuss the Romantic notion of good and evil. How does it relate to the creature’s actions so far?

2. Explain why the creature feels it is so important to come out of hiding and talk to the elder De Lacey.

3. Describe how the creature feels when he finds Victor’s journal in his pocket.

Volume Three: Chapters One and Two
1. Victor says of his father that “a more indulgent and less dictatorial parent did not exist upon earth.” Discuss Alphonse’s influence on Victor and Victor’s feelings towards his father.

2. Give some examples of the Romantic concept in Shelley’s use of physical locations. How does it help establish character and mood in the novel?

Volume Three: Chapters Three and Four
1. Discuss Victor's reluctance to create the second creature. Why do you think he destroys it in front of the other creature?

2. What does the creature mean when he tells Victor, "I shall be with you on your wedding night"?

3. Compare Alphonse's and Victor's relationship to Victor's relationship with the creature.

Volume Three: Chapters Five and Six
1. Compare the events that occur on Victor's wedding night to the night when Victor destroyed the second creature.

2. Did it surprise you that the creature killed Elizabeth and not Victor? Explain your answer.

3. Why do you think Victor finally tells the magistrate about the creature?

Volume Three: Chapter Seven
1. When Victor is chasing him, why does the creature keep leaving clues to help Victor follow his trail?

2. Do you think Victor is right when he urges Walton to abandon his ambition? Explain your answer.

3. Is Victor justified in blaming himself for the deaths of Henry, Elizabeth, and his other family members? Explain your answer.

4. Discuss the creature's final speech to Walton. How does he really feel about Victor? Is he sad or happy about his death?

5. Why do you think the creature wants to eliminate any evidence of his own existence?

Sample Essay Outlines

- **Topic #1**
  Discuss the true nature and personality of the creature in Shelley's Frankenstein.

  Outline
  I. Thesis Statement: Although the creature behaves viciously and murders several people, he is not inherently evil or malicious.

  II. Creation of the creature
  A. The creature as a product of Victor Frankenstein:
  1. Construction of creature from body parts
  2. Victor brings the creature to life
  3. Rejection of the creature by Frankenstein
  4. Confusion and pain of rejection
  5. Experience of physical senses
  6. Emotional response
  B. The creature as a lost innocent:
  1. Wanders in the woods, alone and confused
  2. Discovery of food and fire
  3. Seeking shelter from natural elements

III. The creature in society
A. Second rejection by humans:
1. The peasant flees from the creature
2. He is isolated from society
B. Creature understands he is repulsive to humans:
1. Prefers to hide in the forest, away from people
2. The creature realizes he is ugly
C. The benevolent nature of the creature:
1. Admiration of the De Lacey family
2. Anonymous acts of kindness towards the family
3. Appreciation of music and literature
4. Attempt to communicate with M. De Lacey
a. Seeks companionship from the father
b. Experiences sadness instead of anger at Felix's attack
5. Burns down cottage after De Laceys move out
a. First violent act in response to rejection
D. The creature attempts to save the drowning girl:
1. Attacked by girl's father
2. Further rejection by society

IV. Creature's relationship with Frankenstein
A. Rejection and abandonment by "father":
B. Creature discovers identity of his creator:
1. Creature experiences true rage
C. Creature demands a mate from Frankenstein:
1. Only wants to be left alone with a companion
2. Promises not to harm anyone
D. Creature's last hope destroyed by his creator:
1. Frankenstein tears apart the mate
2. Creature vows revenge
3. Kills Henry and Elizabeth
E. Frankenstein becomes as miserable as his creature:
1. His loved ones are dead
2. He feels responsible and guilty over their deaths

V. The creature's true nature and desires
A. Love and acceptance by society
B. Companionship
C. An end to his lonely isolation
D. Final desire: a fiery, anonymous death;
1. Creature understands he can never find peace or happiness in human society
E. The creature as a product of society:
1. Prejudice and behavior of humans

VI. Conclusion

- **Topic #2**

Illustrate Mary Shelley's use of Romantic concepts in Frankenstein.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Frankenstein is a classic example of literature written in the Romantic tradition.

II. Romanticism
A. History of romanticism in literature and the arts:
1. Examples
B. Characteristics of Romantic literature:
1. Feelings and emotionalism vs. intellect
2. Emotional response of characters
3. Nonrealistic portrayal of characters
4. Dramatic settings
a. Mountain landscapes
b. Germany and the Rhine
c. Scotland
5. Bizarre stories and events
C. Major Romantic writers:
1. Mary Shelley
2. Percy Bysshe Shelley
3. Lord George Gordon Byron
4. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge
5. Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen
6. Edgar Allan Poe and the American movement

III. Romantic elements in Frankenstein

A. Bizarre story of monster and creation:
1. Unexplained events
2. Strange creature
B. Characters driven by emotional need:
1. Creature
a. Need for love and acceptance
b. Loneliness and desire for revenge
2. Victor Frankenstein
a. Love of friends and family
b. Despair and shock
c. Revenge against creature
3. Elizabeth Lavenza
a. Love of Victor and family
b. Belief in Justine's innocence
c. Self-sacrifice for Victor
4. Robert Walton
a. Desire for close, loving friend
5. Henry Clerval
a. Close, loyal friend and companion
C. Romantic settings:
1. Switzerland and the Alps
2. Ingolstadt
3. Scotland and Orkney Islands
4. The Arctic
D. Emotional events:
1. Death of Caroline Beaufort
2. Adoption of children by Frankensteins
3. Death of William Frankenstein
4. Trial of Justine Moritz

5. Death of Henry Clerval
6. Marriage of Victor and Elizabeth
7. Murder of Elizabeth
8. Death of Victor Frankenstein
E. Creature as a natural man
1. Idea of the "Noble Savage"

IV. Conclusion

- **Topic #3**

Victor's driving, obsessive ambition ruined his life and led to his own death and the murder of his loved ones. Illustrate how ambition affects not only Victor and Robert Walton, but also the creature in Frankenstein.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Ambition and the quest for knowledge is a fatal flaw in the characters of Victor Frankenstein, Robert Walton, and the creature.

II. Victor Frankenstein's obsession
A. Curiosity and desire for knowledge:
1. As a boy, sees lightning strike tree
2. Study of Agrippa and Paracelsus
B. Attends University of Ingolstadt:
1. Influence of M. Waldman
2. Intensive study and experimentation
3. Loses contact with family and friends
C. Creation of a monster:
1. Ambition blinds him to reality of creation
a. Thinks creature will be beautiful
2. Confronted with living creature
3. Horrified at what he has created
D. Life destroyed by his creation:
1. Family and friends killed
2. No hope for future
3. Sinks into black hole of anger and revenge

III. The creature's quest for knowledge
A. Creature as a blank innocent:
1. Is benevolent, but knows nothing
2. Wants to be accepted
B. Is exposed to world of knowledge:
1. Observation of De Lacey family
2. Books, music, and loving relationships
3. Learns to read and write
C. Desires knowledge and understanding of world:
1. Reads Paradise Lost and other works
2. Reads Victor's journal
D. Acquires a terrible knowledge:
1. Understands who he is and how he was created
2. Realizes he is doomed to lifelong misery
E. Becomes obsessed with notion of revenge:
1. Murders innocent people

2. Devotes life to torment of Victor
3. Seeks release in fiery death

IV. Walton's expedition
A. Walton's obsessive quest:
1. Like Victor, spends years pursuing dream
B. Confronted with reality of hardship and pain:
1. Could destroy crew and himself
C. Learns from Victor and ultimately abandons quest

V. Conclusion

Compare and Contrast

- **Early 1800s:** After the French Revolution ended, England turned its attention to domestic and economic concerns—particularly to problems resulting from a rapidly growing industrial nation.

  Today: Domestic and economic concerns about employment and education also stem from rapid change, as the business world moves from emphasizing industrial production to a service and information economy.
- **Early 1800s:** Scientific advancements, especially Erasmus Darwin's studies in biological evolution, caused individuals to question God's authority and inquire into matters regarding the generation of human life.

  Today: Animal scientists in Scotland successfully tweak the DNA from an adult sheep to clone another individual sheep. The U.S. government bans federal funding of experiments with cloning using human DNA.
- **Early 1800s:** Romantic writers experience a literary Renaissance as critical theory affirms the achievements of the great poets of the age. Writers enjoy literary freedom, experimenting with a bold new language and new genres like Gothicism.

  Today: Appreciation of the arts seems to be on the decrease, as most individuals spend their time with television rather than with various art mediums. Funding has been greatly reduced for the National Endowment of the Arts, and even high school music and art classes have had to be cut at many public schools.
- **Early 1800s:** Nautical explorations establish trading routes and open up communication to other cultures. Robert Walton's quest to find the North Pole mirrors the adventures of nineteenth-century scientists and explorers alike.

  Today: The continuing exploration of space that seemed so likely after the lunar landing in 1969 has slowed down, as governments can no longer afford to fund large space programs. Projects involving a space station around Earth and a manned mission to Mars are more likely to come from cooperative efforts involving several nations.

Topics for Further Study

- Compare and contrast Robert Walton's and Victor Frankenstein's personalities. You might draw parallels between their quest to conquer the unknown, their emotional ties to other individuals, or their loneliness.

- Research some of the prominent issues in your society that Shelley addresses in her novel, such as genetic engineering, or the effects of abandonment on children whose fathers have disappeared from their lives. Make a comparison between the novel and your discoveries and discuss observations about how your society is coping with or addressing these sensitive issues.
- Analyze the theme of justice in the novel. What does Justine's trial have to do with Victor's treatment of his creature or the creature's treatment of Victor's family and friends? How does the theme of revenge relate to issues of justice?
- Research some of the characteristics of the Romantic movement, such as isolation, an emphasis on nature, or the notion that humans are inherently good, and argue how and why Shelley's novel is an embodiment of the English Romantic movement. Or, argue why her novel is not an embodiment of the English Romantic movement.

Media Adaptations

There have been so many plays, movies, and recordings of *Frankenstein* that it would be difficult to list all of the productions. Therefore, the list below represents the most popular, most controversial, and most influential recordings and dramatizations:

- Recordings: *Frankenstein* phonodisc dramatization with sound effects and music, directed by Christopher Casson, Spoken Arts, 1970; *Frankenstein*, taken from a broadcast of the CBS program. *Suspense*, starring Herbert Marshall, American Forces Radio and Television Service, 1976; *Frankenstein* read by James Mason, Caedmon Records, 1977; *Weird Circle*, containing Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart; and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, recorded from original radio broadcasts, Golden Age, 1978.
- Films: *Frankenstein* starred Colin Clive and Boris Karloff; it was released by Universal in 1931. *The Bride of Frankenstein*, the sequel to the 1931 film, starred Boris Karloff and Elsa Lanchester; it was released in 1935 by Universal. *Son of Frankenstein*, also a sequel to the above mentioned productions, starred Basil Rathbone, Karloff, and Bela Lugosi and was released in 1939 by Universal. All three are available from MCA/Universal Home Video.
- *The Curse of Frankenstein*, a 1957 horror film produced by Warner Brothers, included Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee as cast members; the first in a series of films inspired by Shelley's novel, it is available from Warner Home Video. *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* was released in 1969 by Warner Brothers, Peter Cushing and Veronica Carlson star as the central characters. *Young Frankenstein* was released in 1974 by Fox; available from CBS-Fox Video, this comedy-horror film received Academy Award nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Sound; cast includes Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, and director-star Mel Brooks.
- More recent films include 1985's The Bride, starring Sting and Jennifer Beals, available from CBS/Fox Video; famed horror director Roger Corman's 1990 work Frankenstein Unbound, which includes Mary Shelley as a character and stars John Hurt, Raul Julia, and Bridget Fonda, available from CBS/Fox Video; the 1993 cable production *Frankenstein*, starring Patrick Bergin and Randy Quaid, available from Turner Home Entertainment; and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, released in 1994 by American Zoetrope and available from Columbia Tristar Home Video, featuring Robert De Niro and director-star Kenneth Branagh.
- Plays: *Frankenstein: A Gothic Thriller* by David Campton, published by Garnet Miller in 1973;*Frankenstein* by Tim Kelley, published by Samuel French in 1974.

What Do I Read Next?

- Dracula by Bram Stoker was published in 1897 and horrified audiences with its tale of a bloodsucking vampire who appears at nightfall to pursue vulnerable women.

- Written by Mary Shelley in 1826, The Last Man is a work of science fiction that chronicles the extermination of the human race by plague.
- A work by Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) is the story of a man bound to and haunted by another man through his knowledge of a secret crime.
- Prometheus Unbound, by Percy Shelley, is a dramatized philosophical essay about the origin of evil and the moral responsibility of individuals to restore order in their world. It was published in 1820.
- Lois McMaster Bujold's Hugo-winning science-fiction novel Mirror Dance (1994) explores issues surrounding clones and an individual's responsibility to his clone.
- In *Genetic Engineering: Dreams and Nightmares* (1996), authors V. E. A. Russo, David Cove, and Enzo Russo present a discussion of the ethical issues surrounding modern scientific advances in genetics. The book is targeted toward the average lay reader.

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