August 21, 2008

Dear Fellow Librarians, Media Specialists, and Educators:

On behalf of the Weber Reads Committee, we would like to invite your school to participate in this year’s Weber Reads program. In its second year, the program is part of the One Book, One Community project initiated by the Library of Congress’ Center for the Book. The Weber Reads program is designed to create a community-wide discussion by encouraging all area residents to read the same exceptional book, *Frankenstein*, or, *The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley, a well-told gothic novel readers of all ages will enjoy reading, hearing, and discussing.

To help ensure all segments of our community have the opportunity to explore the story of Dr. Frankenstein and his creature, age-appropriate versions of this timeless tale are being donated to local school libraries for inclusion in their collections. In this spirit, we would like to present your library with this copy of *Frankenstein*, or, *The Modern Prometheus*. In addition, we have also included curriculum-based lesson suggestions and supplementary materials in order to make the inclusion of *Frankenstein* in library and classroom instruction as easy and enjoyable as possible. The lesson plan packet is designed to reflect the story told in *Frankenstein*, and is based on core curriculum requirements.

Although we have included implementation ideas, we encourage each of you to find unique and meaningful methods to incorporate *Frankenstein* into your library and classrooms.

We hope you enjoy your copy of *Frankenstein*, or, *The Modern Prometheus*.

Sincerely,

The Weber Reads Committee
frankenstein

Lesson Plan and Supplementary Materials
For High School Classrooms and Libraries
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Lesson Plan for High School Classrooms and Libraries

Introduction: This lesson plan is designed to provide an in depth examination of the gothic novel *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*. A wide variety of cross-curricular activities and essay and/or discussion questions have been designed to further the students’ in depth understanding of the major themes of the story by drawing upon their established and emerging academic education, practical knowledge, and personal experiences.

Purpose: To provide high school students with solid, in depth exposure to the story and themes of the novel *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*.

Learning Objectives:
1. Students will gain an in depth understanding of the basic story and themes of *Frankenstein*.
2. Students will explore the major themes of the story and make connections between the story of *Frankenstein* and their knowledge of its historical context and/or the modern world via their own lives.
3. Students will increase their vocabulary by being exposed to and learning new words and concepts introduced during the story.
4. Students will learn to verbally, textually, and artistically express ideas and connections made between the story and the historical context and/or the modern world via their own lives.
5. Students will become familiar with the basic components of a gothic novel.
6. Students will begin to be able to put the story of *Frankenstein* in the proper historical and literary contexts.
7. Students will develop a wide variety of writing styles such as letters, essays, and commentary.

Procedure: Students will individually, or as a class read *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*. They will then participate in one or more of the learning activities presented below, conduct small group discussions, or write short essays.

Although each activity has been designed to fulfill the core curriculum standards accompanying each outline, the historical and literary importance of the story make it ideal for a wide variety of subject-specific core curriculum implementations. Other subject-specific learning activities can also be designed and used to fulfill the unique curriculum needs of each classroom.

Pre-assessment Activity

As a pre-assessment activity, begin an open dialog with students about the general story of Victor Frankenstein and his monster. A good place to start would be an examination of their knowledge of the modern Frankenstein as depicted in modern film and television. Ask open-ended questions such as “What do you know about Frankenstein and his monster?” or “How have you previously been exposed to the story of Frankenstein and his monster?” to gauge any preexisting knowledge of the story and characters.

For a more structured pre-assessment, students may also be given the vocabulary included in the supplementary material section. Students will then write definitions of each word with which they are currently familiar. A similar post-assessment may also be conducted after the novel and activities are complete in which students provide definitions for the vocabulary in order to gauge vocabulary growth.
Learning Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Curriculum Standard</th>
<th>Learning Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Arts</strong></td>
<td>Before reading <em>Frankenstein</em>, students will be given one of the attribute webs(^1) provided on pages 37-38 and one of the story maps(^2) on page 39, 40. Students will complete the worksheets based on their preconceived knowledge of the Monster and his story. While reading the book, students will complete one of the feelings and/or character map(^3) and a story map provided on pages 41, 42. Once they have completed the story, students will consider their preconceived notions about the Monster. Students will then compose a letter to one of the entities they believe is responsible for their skewed views of the Monster. The letter will be written from the perspective of Mary Shelley and will include her feelings, thoughts, and evaluation of the distorted popular image of “Frankenstein” in relation to the Monster she created. A sample letter to “Hollywood” has been included on page 43.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard I: Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>Objectives 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard II: Writing</td>
<td>Objectives 1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard III: Designing/Implementing</td>
<td>Objectives 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts: Theater</td>
<td>As soon as Victor glimpses his creation, it is clear he regrets his manipulation of technology and medicine. Students will be divided into small groups. Each group will write, produce, and perform a public service announcement featuring Victor discussing the dangers of unethically manipulating technology and medical science. Students may also be assigned the task of creating sets, costumes, and backdrops. A variety of public service announcements focusing on an array of topics can be viewed on the Ad Council’s website at <a href="http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=15">http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=15</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard I: Script Writing</td>
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<td>Standard II: Acting</td>
<td>Objectives 1-5</td>
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\(^1\) attribute webs
\(^2\) story maps
\(^3\) feelings and/or character map
Objective 4
In the novel, Justine is wrongfully accused, convicted, and executed for the murder of William Frankenstein. Students will be asked to consider an alternative storyline in which the Monster was captured and put on trial for the murder of Justine.

In order to examine the prejudices and challenges the Monster would face from the justice system, students will prepare and conduct a mock trial. Students will be assigned roles of major characters in the trial and as the prosecution and defense teams.

In depth instructions for conducting a mock trial can be found at http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/bkshelf/resource/mt_conduct.htm

Instructions for a Frankenstein-specific mock trial can be found at http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/frankenstein/

If you would like to conduct a mock trial in which Victor Frankenstein is the defendant, consider putting Dr. Frankenstein on trial for “crimes against nature.”

Frankenstein’s Monster makes it clear through his conversations with Victor that his character was negatively affected by the rejection and alienation he suffered at the hands of his creator and society as a whole. Students will consider the ways in which the Monster may have developed differently had he been loved and nurtured. Assuming the story may have unfolded differently, students will be asked to consider what type of person the Monster would be if he were alive today had he been cared for and accepted.

After assigning the modern day Monster a set of skills, traits, and talents, students will compose a resume for the Monster. Students will choose a job for which the Modern Day Monster would apply and include work experience, references, and other pertinent information.

A sample resume and sample references has been included on page 44, 45.
Language Arts
Standard I: Reading Comprehension
Objectives 1-3
Standard II: Writing
Objectives 1-3

Objectives 1-2
In the novel, Mary Shelley is almost frustratingly vague about the exact technology and medical science Dr. Frankenstein uses to bring the Monster to life. Students will be asked to hypothesize about the medical procedures and technology Victor utilized. Students will then create a lab notebook outlining Victor’s studies and methods. Students can use a combination of sketches and narrative to complete the notebook.

A more introspective version of this activity can be conducted by having the students compose a journal from the perspective of Victor Frankenstein. Entries will span the entire novel, and chart the emotional, physical, and intellectual changes Victor undergoes as the story progresses.

Fine Arts: Visual
Foundation 1
Standard I: Making
Objectives 1-2
Standard II: Perceiving
Objectives 1-2
Standard III: Expressing

Education Technology

Standard I-VIII
As a class, students will create a blog which will feature posts written by characters from Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus. Each student will be assigned a character and write posts from that perspective. Posts will focus on commentary about current issues. Students should consider each character’s unique point of view when composing their posts.

Blogs can be created and maintained through free services such as Blogger, https://www.blogger.com/start and WordPress, http://wordpress.org.

Language Arts
Standard I: Reading Comprehension
Objectives 1-3

Standard II: Writing
Objectives 1-3

Geography for Life
Standard I:
Objectives 1-3
Standard II:

Objectives 1-2
Mary Shelley utilizes many different settings and landscapes throughout her novel. As they read the story, students will be given the blank world map4 and the blank timeline5 located on page 46, 47. As they read the story, they will chart the travels of Victor and his Monster and plot them along a timeline.

Once they have completed the map and timeline, students will choose one location featured in the novel. Students will then research the culture and history of the location and present their findings in an oral or written research report.

For a more advanced version of the activity, students will research their chosen location based on the timeline of the novel. Students will then analyze the appropriate section of the novel and explain how the culture, history, and current events of their location may have
Mary Shelley’s novel has been the inspiration for many films. With each film, a movie poster is created to advertise it. After reading the novel, students will create their own movie poster which reflects a movie that attempts to portray Mary Shelley’s novel and Monster accurately. Students should consider this poster an advertising method and therefore consider what elements of the novel will attract audiences. For inspiration, several of the movie posters related to Frankenstein can be reviewed at http://www.movieposter.com/cgi-bin/mpw8/search.pl

Several movie adaptations have been made since the publication of Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus. The extent to which the movie tries to authentically retell Mary Shelley’s story, varies from movie to movie. In an attempt to create a movie that stays true to Mary Shelley’s story, students will choose the cast for a modern day adaptation of the novel. Students will include justifications for each casting choice. It should outline the traits of each character and how their chosen actor is uniquely qualified to portray them.

Students may also compose a personal ad from the perspective of a someone who might answer the Monster’s ad. Toward the end of the novel, the Monster pleads with Victor to create a wife for him. Students will analyze the character of the Monster and consider what type of characteristics he may desire in a wife. Students will then compose a personal ad which reflects not only the Monster’s characteristics, but those of a prospective wife.

The Monster’s course is ultimately shaped by the choice Victor makes to reject him. Students will analyze Victor’s decision making process and outline other choices he might have made and the possible results.
Students will be given the Decision Making Hierarchy Chart located on page 49. Using the chart, students will outline alternative choices and their results.

To personalize this activity, students can fill out the Decision Making Hierarchy Chart based on a personal decision they are facing. The chart will help students visualize their options and examine possible consequences and results of each choice.

To further examine the choices that are made throughout the novel by both Victor and the Monster, students can complete the Cause and Effect Charts located on pages 50, 51, 52 while reading the story.

**Group Discussion or Essay Questions High School**

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**Core Curriculum Standard**

**Group Discussion or Essay Questions**

Objectives 1-3

**Language Arts**

Standard II: Writing

Objectives 1-3

The full title of Shelley’s novel is *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*. Analyze the significance of the subtitle? How is Victor Frankenstein a modern Prometheus?

Retellings of the Prometheus story can be found in *Bulfinch’s Mythology* by Thomas Bulfinch and *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton.

How does the death of Victor’s mother set the story into motion? How do emotions like loss, anger, and helplessness fuel and drive the decisions we make? Are the influence of those emotions positive or negative in the story? How do those types of emotions affect the decisions we make in our own lives?

Despite having been rejected by Victor and society in general, the Monster still develops the ability to feel compassion and love. Is the ability to love and the desire to be loved and accepted an inherent quality all humans share?

A central theme in the novel is alienation. What types of alienation do we have in our society? Who do we alienate? How does this alienation affect the individuals and our society as a whole?

Shelley uses a wide variety of landscapes throughout the novel.
In the novel, Victor is clearly stepping outside of traditional medical and ethical standards as he creates his monster. Who are the “Dr. Frankensteins” within our own society? How are they trying to step beyond the bounds of nature?

A key moment in the novel is when Victor cruelly rejects the Monster immediately after seeing his grotesque creation. How might this scene have been different had Victor been a woman?

The Monster explains to Victor that his crimes and malice were the result of repeated rejection and alienation from society. Has this novel changed the way you view “outsiders”? Has it changed the way you treat others?

As the creator of the Monster, Victor can been viewed as the Monster’s father. How might the story have unfolded differently had the Monster had both a mother and a father?

Considering a major theme in the story is the dangers of the ruthless pursuit of knowledge, how do you think Mary Shelley would feel about controversial topics such as cloning, stem cell research, and gene manipulation?

Victor ultimately destroys the wife he works to create for the Monster fearing they may unleash generations of monsters into the world. What practices do we have in our own society that create “monsters”?

Reading plays an important role in the story of *Frankenstein*, or, *The Modern Prometheus*. Victor’s formal education and ruthless pursuit of knowledge could not have been possible without his literacy and the Monster learns about his human nature through reading. Describe a moment in your own life when reading made a difference. What were you reading? How did it impact or change your life?

The story of Victor and the Monster begins to truly unfold when Dr. Frankenstein makes the decision to step beyond the bounds of nature and manipulate technology and science in order to create his Monster. Describe technologies within our own society that have the
potential to become negative forces within our world. What are they? Why are they dangerous? What can we do to curb their negative effects?

Biography of Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley (1797-1851) was the daughter of William Godwin, the foremost English writer on the French Revolution, and his wife Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Her mother died only days after Mary’s birth.

Mary was brought up with her elder sister Fanny Godwin, the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and her American lover Gilbert Imlay, who was adopted by Godwin and reared as his own child until the age of eleven when he disclosed her parentage to her. The family complications were considerably advanced in 1801 with Godwin’s remarriage to his neighbor, the widowed Mary Jane Clairmont, which brought two additional children, Charles and Claire Clairmont, into the household. A fifth sibling was added in 1803 with the birth of William Godwin, Jr.

The five children were instructed principally at home. Following Godwin’s own precepts, there was little distinction made in their educations on the basis of sex, so Mary Godwin had an education of considerable breadth, one that few girls of her time could equal. Apart from formal instruction, the children were exposed almost daily to Godwin’s extensive acquaintance among the London intelligentsia, ranging from the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom Mary heard recite “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in Godwin’s living room, to scientists like Humphry Davy and her father’s bosom friend William Nicholson, the two foremost experimenters with galvanic electricity in the early years of the nineteenth century. These figures especially would later have a noticeable impact on the writing of *Frankenstein*.

As heady as this intellectual climate was, there was a practical side to Mary’s education in the Godwin-Clairmont household as well, for its income derived mainly from the proceeds of the Juvenile Library, their publishing venture specializing in books of instruction for younger readers. At the age of ten Mary had her first experience with publication, when the Juvenile Library printed her witty poem, *Mounseer Nongtongpaw; or, The Discoveries of John Bull in a Trip to Paris*. By 1812 it was in a fourth edition.

It was on November 11, 1812 that Mary met the poet Percy Shelley, then only twenty years old. Shelley was visiting her father (whom he admired) accompanied by his wife Harriet. They met again in May 1814. Mary was by this time seventeen and fascinated by Shelley. They were mutually attracted, and Shelley much admired her not only for her appearance and her parents’ reputations, but also for her intellectual abilities that far outweighed those of Harriet.

Mary and Percy eloped on July 28, 1814 to a France still recovering from defeat in war. This period would provide material for Mary’s second book, *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour Through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland*. No doubt, it also inspired the brilliantly described and evocative landscapes of *Frankenstein*. The couple were ruined upon their return by disapproving parents on both sides who cut down their allowances until the creditors were upon them. Worse, Percy’s second child by Harriet was born in November and Mary herself had become pregnant. She lost her child only weeks after her birth on March 6, 1815 and almost immediately became pregnant with William who was born in 1816. Mary also had to care for a seriously ill Percy.
Between 1815 and 1819, Mary lost three of her four children. In the same period, Fanny Imlay Godwin and Harriet Shelley committed suicide. Two weeks after they were notified of Harriet’s suicide, on December 30, 1816, Mary Godwin and Percy Bysshe Shelley were married.

This event brought about an immediate reconciliation with Godwin, but was attended as well by a lawsuit in the Court of Chancery brought by Harriet’s family with the intention of depriving the father of custody of his two children from the marriage. The success of this suit convinced Shelley and Mary that they would suffer continual persecution if they remained in England.

On the first day of 1818 *Frankenstein* was published anonymously, followed shortly after by Shelley’s book-length narrative poem, *The Revolt of Islam*. On March 12 Mary and Shelley, with their two children Clara and William, departed from England to make a new home in Italy.

The four years they spent in Italy saw the establishment of Percy Bysshe Shelley as one of the foremost poets in the English language. It likewise furthered the career of Mary Shelley as “The Author of *Frankenstein*,” the rubric under which she continued her anonymous publication with a second novel immersed in medieval Italian history, *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (1823). After Percy Bysshe Shelley’s death by drowning in 1822, Mary Shelley found herself without sufficient financial means to remain in Italy and, with some reluctance, returned to England to begin a second existence there in the fall of 1823.

She never equalled the popular success of *Frankenstein*, but she published a number of other novels after *Valperga: The Last Man* (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). In addition to her novels, she produced a large volume of miscellaneous prose: short stories, biographies, and travel writings, including the retrospective *Rambles in Italy and Germany of 1844*. She likewise supervised the publication of her husband’s *Posthumous Poems*, which appeared in 1824, his *Poetical Works* (1839), and his prose (1839 and 1840). Her only surviving child was Percy Florence Shelley, who was born in 1819 and who acceded to the baronetcy upon the death of Shelley’s father, Sir Timo-
thy, in 1844. Mary Shelley herself died in her home in Chester Square, London, on February 1, 1851.

**Timeline of Mary Shelley’s Life**

1797 [Age 0-1] William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft marry on March 29. Both Godwin and Wollstonecraft are famous radical writers and publishers of their day. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Shelley) is born August 30 in London. Her mother, Mary, dies ten days later.

1801 [Age 4] William Godwin marries Mrs. Mary Jane Clairmont on December 21. Mrs. Clairmont’s children, Charles, age 7, and Jane (later called Claire), age 4, join the Godwin family along with Mary and her half-sister, Fanny Imlay, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft by Gilbert Imlay.

1812 [Age 14-15] Percy Bysshe Shelley, recently married to Harriet Westbrook, starts a correspondence with Mary’s father, William Godwin, whose ideas he admires. Shelley becomes a regular visitor to the Godwin house during Mary’s absence. She has gone to stay with the Baxter family in Dundee, Scotland, but meets Percy and Harriet on a brief visit home on November 11.


1815 [Age 17] Mary gives premature birth in February to a daughter who dies, unnamed, several days later.

1816 [Age 18-19] Mary gives birth to a son, William, on January 24. Percy, Mary, and William, along with Mary’s half-sister, Claire, leave England for Italy, then Geneva, Switzerland, in early May. They meet George Gordon and Lord Byron, with whom Claire has formed a liaison. Mary begins to write *Frankenstein* in June or July. In September, they return to England. Fanny Imlay, Mary’s other half-sister, commits suicide on October 9. On December 15, news reaches Mary and Percy that Harriet Shelley has committed suicide, her pregnant body found in the Serpentine River five days earlier. Mary and Percy marry in London on December 30.

1817 [Age 19-20] In early March, the Shelleys, along with Claire and her daughter by Byron, Allegra, move to the English countryside, in Marlow. On May 14, Mary completes the *Frankenstein* manuscript. Mary gives birth to a daughter, Clara, on September 2. A book by Mary and Percy, *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland: With Letters Descriptive of a Sail around the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni*, is published anonymously in London.

1819  [Age 21-22] The Shelleys return to Rome. Son William Shelley dies on June 7. In August, Mary begins writing a semi-autobiographical novella, *Mathilda*, the theme of which is father-daughter incestuous love, not published until 1959. On November 12, Mary gives birth to a son, Percy Florence. He will be the only Shelley child to survive.

1821  [Age 23-24] The Shelleys move to Pisa in October, with Byron as a neighbor. Mary completes her novel *Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, which is retitled by Mary's father, William Godwin, as *Valperga*. She also writes two mythological dramas, *Proserpine* and *Midas*.

1822  [Age 24-25] On June 16, Mary miscarries and almost dies from the resulting hemorrhaging. In July, the first translation of *Frankenstein* is published in France. Percy Bysshe Shelley and Edward Williams sail to Leghorn on July 1 to meet the poet Leigh Hunt, but are lost at sea in a storm on the return journey; their bodies are found ten days later. Mary begins work in September to transcribe Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry in preparation for a posthumous collection.

1823  [Age 25-26] *Valperga* is published in February. The second edition of *Frankenstein* is published in two volumes on August 11. Also in August, Mary returns to London with her son, Percy Florence. A play by Richard Brinsley Peake, *Presumption, or The Fate of Frankenstein*, opens at the English Opera House for a 37-performance run; this is just one of several plays written and performed at this time on the *Frankenstein* theme.


1826  [Age 28-29] *The Last Man* is published in February. Percy Florence Shelley becomes heir to the Shelley title and estate when Charles Bysshe, Percy Bysshe Shelley's son by Harriet, dies.


1832  [Age 34-35] Percy Florence enters boarding school at Harrow.

1835  [Age 37-38] The first volume of the *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal* for Lardner's *The Cabinet of Biography* appears. Mary contributes articles on the lives of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli. In April, the novel *Lodore* is published in London and is attributed to “The Author of Frankenstein.” Late that year, the second volume of *Lives* is published, with articles on Alfieri, Goldoni, and others attributed to Mary.


1839  [Age 41-42] Mary publishes, with the permission of Sir Timothy Shelley, an edition of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Poetical Works*. Sir Timothy’s one proviso is that Mary cannot write a biography of Percy, but she circumvents this by including biographical material in the notes to the poems. Also, Percy’s *Essays, Letters, and Translations* are published.


1845  [Age 47-48] Two attempts to blackmail Mary with letters she had written are thwarted.


1851  [Age 53] On February 1, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley dies at her home in London. Lady Jane Shelley, Percy Florence’s spouse, arranges for the remains of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin to be moved to the St. Peter’s Churchyard, Bournemouth. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is buried between her parents.
Family Tree and Important Figures in the Life of Mary Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley: The English Poet Percy Bysshe Shelley was already married when he fell in love with Mary Godwin in 1814. Like Mary’s radical parents, Mary and Percy believed that love, not law, must determine marriage. The couple eventually married after Percy’s first wife, Harriet Westbrooke, committed suicide in 1816. Percy edited Mary’s Frankenstein. Mary was devastated when he drowned off the northern Italian coast in July 1822. She edited several posthumously published collections of his poetry.

Claire Clairmont: When William Godwin married his widowed neighbor, Mary gained a step-sister, Claire. she became a constant companion to Mary and Percy Shelley, though Mary was often annoyed by her presence. In 1816 Claire proposed the trip to Geneva (where Frankenstein was conceived) so she could pursue her love affair with the English poet Lord Byron. By summer’s end, Byron grew tired of Claire and traveled on to Italy. Claire bore his daughter, Allegra, in England in January 1817 and continued to live with the Shelleys.

George Gordon Byron: The English poet Lord Byron achieved overnight literary fame in 1812 when the first two cantos of his Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage were published. Rumors about his romantic liaisons, including an affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh, caused Byron to leave England in 1816. That summer he vacationed with Percy, Mary, and Claire Clairmont at Lake Geneva. There he proposed the ghost-story-writing contest that inspired Frankenstein. Mary Shelley and Lord Byron remained friends until his death in Greece in 1824.

Mary Wollstonecraft: Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley’s mother, was a radical in her day, advocating social and educational equality for men and women in A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792). Although she and her lover, William Godwin, were philosophically against marriage, they wed when she became pregnant. Wollstonecraft died eleven days after her daughter Mary was born. Mary idolized her. She declared her love for Percy Shelley at her mother’s grave in London’s St. Pancras cemetery.

William Godwin: William Godwin, the English philosopher and author of Political Justice (1793), let his daughter Mary read widely and attend intellectual gatherings at his home. One of Godwin’s followers, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, fell for young Mary and in 1814 the two ran off to Europe. Disgusted, Godwin treated the couple badly, but reconciled with them after they married in December 1816. Although Godwin was often a cruel, intolerant father, Mary Shelley dedicated Frankenstein to him.

Fanny Imlay: After an affair with Gilbert Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft bore a daughter, Fanny Imlay. Gilbert later rejected Mary and they never married. After Mary’s death, William Godwin adopted the young Fanny whom he raised as his own child. Fanny was always a troubled girl. In October 1817 she checked into a hotel where she took an overdose of laudanum and died. News of Mary Shelley’s half-sister Fanny’s death reached her as she was writing Frankenstein.

Gilbert Imlay: Gilbert Imlay served as an army officer during the Revolutionary War. He later moved to Europe where he served as a business speculator, trader, and American diplomat. In 1773, he met and began an affair with Mary Wollstonecraft in Paris. After the birth of their daughter, Fanny, Mary went to Scandinavia where she managed his business interests. While separated, Gilbert began another affair and rejected Mary. The two never married.

Harriet Westbrooke: Though not in love with her, Percy Bysshe Shelley married Harriet West-
brooke because she was in love with him. Shelley met and fell in love with Mary Godwin during a separation from Harriet. As he did not believe in the legal state of marriage, Shelley felt he did nothing wrong by leaving Harriet for Mary. Shelley financially supported Harriet until she committed suicide by drowning in the Serpentine. Shelley was denied custody of their two children, Lanthe and Charles.

**Percy Florence Shelley:** Percy Florence Shelley was fourth and only surviving child of Percy and Mary Shelley. Like his father, he attended Eton and Oxford, although he lacked the same intellectual passion of his parents. Upon the death of his grandfather, he acceded the baronetcy in 1844. His wife, Lady Jane St. John, came to oversee the establishment of the Victorian reputations of Percy and Mary Shelley. He and his wife had no children.
The Birth of Frankenstein

In the summer of 1816, nineteen-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and her lover, the poet Percy Shelley (whom she married later that year), visited the poet Lord Byron at his villa beside Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Stormy weather frequently forced them indoors, where they and Byron’s other guests sometimes read from a volume of ghost stories. One evening, Byron challenged his guests to each write one themselves. Mary’s story, inspired by a dream, became Frankenstein.

When I placed my head upon my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. . . . 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. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous Creator of the world. (Mary Shelley, from her introduction to the third edition.)

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 in 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. Ultimately, the novel resonates with philosophical and moral ramifications: themes of nurture versus nature, good versus evil, and ambition versus social responsibility.
Brief Synopsis

This is the familiar story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist obsessed with his desire to penetrate the secret of life and create a “perfect” creature. The novel is actually a series of stories within stories. The outermost is the tale of Walton, a young captain who sails toward the North Pole in hopes of discovering a northern passage to the New World; he is obsessed with penetrating the “dangerous mysteries” of the north. His ship comes upon the mortally ill Dr. Frankenstein, adrift on an ice floe. Most of the novel recounts the strange tale Frankenstein tells Walton as he lies dying on the ship.

At the book’s center is the monster’s own story, as told to Frankenstein. At the moment he gives his creature the spark of life, Frankenstein is overwhelmed with the ugliness and unnaturalness of his creation. He abandons the creature, who then begins to pursue him to seek acceptance, and when that is not forthcoming, to seek revenge, eventually killing all those who Frankenstein loves.

The creature yearns for love and acceptance, but all are horrified by him. At first Frankenstein agrees to create a mate for him — “I am malicious,” the creature explains, “because I am miserable.” But at the last minute he reconsidered, horrified at the implications of possibly creating a superhuman race.

After the creature kills Frankenstein’s brother William, friend Clerval and his beloved Elizabeth, the doctor begins to pursue him throughout Europe and eventually to the Arctic, where Walton encounters them. After the creature is satisfied that Frankenstein is dead, he takes his leave forever, “soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.”
Robert Walton, an English adventurer, undertakes an expedition to the North Pole. While on this expedition (which has been a lifelong dream of his), Walton corresponds with his sister by letter. Amid the ice floes, Walton and his crew find an extremely weary man traveling by dogsled. The man is near death, and they determine to take him aboard. Once the mysterious traveler has somewhat recovered from his weakness, Robert Walton begins to talk to him. They two strike up a friendship. Walton is very lonely and has long desired a close companion. The man is desolate, and for a long while will not talk about why he is traversing the Arctic alone. After becoming more comfortable with Walton, he decides to tell him his long-concealed story.

The speaker is Victor Frankenstein, for whom the book is named. He will be the narrator for the bulk of the novel. Born into a wealthy Swiss family, Victor enjoyed an idyllic, peaceful childhood. His parents were kind, marvellous people; they are presented as ideals, as shining examples of the goodness of the human spirit. His father, Alphonse, fell in love with his wife, Caroline, when her father, a dear friend of his, passed away. Alphonse took the young orphan under his care, and as time passed they fell in love. He provides for his wife in grand style. Out of gratitude for her own good fortune, Caroline is extremely altruistic. She frequently visits the poor who live in her part of the Italian countryside. One day she chances upon the home of a family who has a beautiful foster daughter. Her name is Elizabeth Lavenza. Though they are kind, the poverty of Elizabeth’s foster parents makes caring for her a financial burden. Caroline falls in love with the lovely girl on sight, and adopts her into the Frankenstein family. She is close in age to Victor, and becomes the central, most beloved part of his childhood. Elizabeth is Victor’s most cherished companion. Their parents encourage the children to be close in every imaginable way, as cousins, as brother and sister, and, in the future, as husband and wife.

Victor’s childhood years pass with astonishing speed. Two more sons, William and Ernest, are born into the family. At this time, the elder Frankensteins decide to stop their constant traveling: the family finally settles in Geneva. Though Victor is something of a loner, he does have one dear friend: Henry Clerval, from whom he is inseparable. The two have utterly different ambitions: Victor has developed a passion for science, while Henry longs to study the history of human struggle and endeavor. Eventually, Victor’s parents decide it is time for him to begin his university studies at Ingolstadt. Before his departure, Victor’s mother passes away. On her deathbed, she tells Victor and Elizabeth that it is her greatest desire to see the two of them married. Victor leaves for university, still in mourning for his mother and troubled by this separation from his loved ones.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, life goes on. Because Caroline was so generous, Elizabeth learns to be gracious as well. When she is old enough to know her mind, she extends housing and love to a young girl named Justine, whose mother dislikes her and wishes to be rid of her. Though Justine is a servant in the Frankenstein household, she is regarded as a sister by Elizabeth, Ernest and William.

At Ingolstadt, Victor’s passion for science increases exponentially. He falls into the hands of Waldeman, a chemistry professor, who excites in him ambition and the desire to achieve fame and distinction in the field of natural philosophy. Thus begins the mania that will end in destroying Victor’s life. Victor spends day and night in his laboratory. He develops a consuming interest in the life principle (that is, the force which imparts life to a human being). This interest develops into an unnatural obsession, and Victor undertakes to create a human being out of pieces of the dead. He haunts cemeteries and channel-houses. He tells no one of this work, and years pass without his visiting home. Finally, his
work is completed: one night, the yellow eyes of the creature finally open to stare at Victor. When Vic-
tor beholds the monstrous form of his creation (who is of a gargantuan size and a grotesque ugliness),
he is horror-stricken. He flees his laboratory and seeks solace in the night. When he returns to his rooms,
the creature has disappeared.

Henry joins Victor at school, and the two begin to pursue the study of languages and poetry. Victor has
no desire to ever return to the natural philosophy that once ruled his life. He feels ill whenever he thinks
of the monster he created. Victor and Clerval spend every available moment together in study and play;
two years pass.

Then, a letter from Elizabeth arrives, bearing tragic news. Victor’s younger brother, William, has been
murdered in the countryside near the Frankenstein estate. On his way back to Geneva, Victor is seized
by an unnamable fear. Upon arriving at his village, he staggers through the countryside in the middle of
a lightning storm, wracked with grief at the loss of his brother. Suddenly, he sees a figure, far too colos-
sal to be that of a man, illuminated in a flash of lightning: he instantly recognizes it as his grotesque cre-
ation. At that moment, he realizes that the monster is his brother’s murderer.

Upon speaking to his family the next morning, Victor learns that Justine (his family’s trusted maidser-
vant and friend) has been accused of William’s murder. William was wearing an antique locket at the
time of his death; this bauble was found in Justine’s dress the morning after the murder. Victor knows
she has been framed, but cannot bring himself to say so: his tale will be dismissed as the ranting of a
madman. The family refuses to believe that Justine is guilty. Elizabeth, especially, is heartbroken at the
wrongful imprisonment of her cherished friend. Though Elizabeth speaks eloquently of Justine’s good-
ness at her trial, she is found guilty and condemned to death. Justine gracefully accepts her fate. In the
aftermath of the double tragedy, the Frankenstein family remains in a state of stupefied grief.

While on a solitary hike in the mountains, Victor comes face to face with the creature, who proceeds to
narrate what has become of him since he fled Victor’s laboratory. After wandering great distances and
suffering immense cold and hunger, the monster sought shelter in an abandoned hovel. His refuge
adjoined the cottage of an exiled French family: by observing them, the monster acquired language, as
well as an extensive knowledge of the ways of humanity. He was greatly aided in this by the reading of
three books recovered from a satchel in the snow: Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of
Young Werther*, and a volume of Plutarch’s *Lives*. The monster speaks with great eloquence and cultiva-
tion as a result of his limited but admirable education.

He developed a deep love for the noble (if impoverished) French family, and finally made an overture of
friendship. Having already learned that his hideous appearance inspires fear and disgust, he spoke first
to the family’s elderly patriarch: this honorable old gentleman’s blindness rendered him able to recog-
nize the monster’s sincerity and refinement (irrespective of his appearance). The other members of the
family returned unexpectedly, however, and drove the creature from the cottage with stones.

The monster was full of sorrow, and cursed his creator and his own hideousness. He therefore deter-
mined to revenge himself upon Frankenstein, whose whereabouts he had discovered from the labora-
tory notebooks. Upon his arrival in Geneva, the creature encountered William, whose unspoiled boyish
beauty greatly attracted him. The monster, longing for companionship, asked William to come away
with him, in the hopes that the boy's youthful innocence would cause him to forgive the monster his ugliness. Instead, William struggled and called the monster a number of cruel names; upon learning that the boy was related to Victor, he strangled him in a vengeful fury. Drawn to the beauty of the locket, he took it, and fled to a nearby barn.

There, he found Justine, who had fallen into an exhausted sleep after searching all day and all night for William. The monster's heart was rent (torn) by her angelic loveliness, and he found himself full of longing for her. Suddenly, he was gripped by the agonizing realization that he would never know love. He tucked the locket into the folds of Justine’s dress in an attempt to seek revenge on all withholding womankind.

The monster concludes his tale by denouncing Victor for his abandonment; he demands that Victor construct a female mate for him, so that he may no longer be so utterly alone. If Victor complies with this rather reasonable request, he promises to leave human society forever. Though he has a brief crisis of conscience, Victor agrees to the task in order to save his remaining loved ones.

He journeys to England with Clerval to learn new scientific techniques that will aid him in his hateful task. Once he has acquired the necessary data, he retreats to a dark corner of Scotland, promising to return to Henry when the job is done. Victor is nearly halfway through the work of creation when he is suddenly seized by fear. Apprehensive that the creature and his mistress will spawn yet more monsters, and thus destroy humanity, he tears the new woman to bits before the monster's very eyes. The creature emits a tortured scream. He leaves Victor with a single, most ominous promise: “I shall be with you on your wedding night.”

Victor takes a small rowboat out into the center of a vast Scottish lake; there, he throws the new woman's tattered remains overboard. He falls into an exhausted sleep, and drifts for an entire day upon the open water. When he finally washes ashore, he is immediately seized and charged with murder. A bewildered Victor is taken into a dingy little room and shown the body of his beloved Henry, murdered at the creature's hands. This brings on a fever of delirium that lasts for months. His father comes to escort him home, and Victor is eventually cleared of all charges.

At home in Geneva, the family begins planning the marriage of Elizabeth and Victor. On their wedding night, Elizabeth is strangled to death in the conjugal bed. Upon hearing the news, Victor's father takes to his bed, where he promptly dies of grief.

Having lost everyone he has ever loved, Victor determines to spend the rest of his life pursuing the creature. This is precisely what the creature himself wants. Now, Frankenstein will be as wretched and bereft as he is. For some time, the creator pursues his creation; he had chased him as far as the Arctic Circle when he was rescued by Walton. Though he cautions the sea captain against excessive ambition and curiosity, he contradictory encourages the sailors to continue on their doomed voyage, though it will mean certain death. His reason: for glory, and for human knowledge. He finally can no longer struggle against his illness, and dies peacefully in his sleep. At the moment of his death, the creature appears: he mourns all that he has done, but maintains that he could not have done otherwise, given the magnitude of his suffering: he is “the miserable and the abandoned, an abortion, to be spurned, and kicked, and trampled on.” He then flees, vowing that he will build for himself a funeral pyre and throw his despised form upon the flames.
Historical Context

Shelley’s text is a reflection on the people, ideas and events of the time in which she lived - for all her initial intention was to write a ghost story, she could not (any more than any writer can) avoid writing about what was current and important. For that reason, an understanding of the age and its concerns helps to illuminate *Frankenstein*.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment (as the major cultural movement of the Eighteenth Century is called), was a culmination of previous thought and progress, and the beginning of new. New ideas and new approaches to old institutions, largely controversial, were setting the stage for revolutions to come. Predominant ideas in Enlightenment thinking were:

- Autonomy of reason
- Perfectibility and progress
- Confidence in the ability to discover causation
- Principles governing nature, man and society
- Assault on traditional authority
- Cosmopolitan solidarity of enlightened intellectuals
- Disgust with nationalism

The Enlightenment was an age when reason ruled. Confidence was increasingly placed in the rational, and analysis by observation and experience replaced trust in tradition and belief. It was believed that order and regularity came from the analysis of observed facts, and this principle (however naive and laughably positive that may seem from a modern perspective) was applied to psychological and social processes.

The principle of causality was supreme in all things.

This applied throughout society, even in the field of religion. The Enlightenment freed science from the trammels of theological tradition and paved the way for the growth of modern culture. It was an age of reason based on faith, but to a great extent, the faith was taken as read, and the reason principally explored. As a result, religion was humanized - no longer was it to be bound up in tradition, superstition and fear - man was at the center of all things, capable of causing his own fall or achieving his own salvation. This could not be done in ways previously known, however. The greatest evil to the Enlightenment was society’s evil - in social justice lay the meaning of life and the way to salvation.

Politics was also affected by the new ideas of the Enlightenment. At the beginning of the Enlightenment period, there was no real antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy; by 1789 this had clearly changed, and an age of social revolution was ushered in. The French Revolution can be seen as both the epitome and the end of the Enlightenment: it was a great example of a movement in favor of social justice, and against traditional authority which held power by military and economic oppression of the masses; it was also, however, in the end, a disturbing and damning demonstration of the failings and flaws of man and of society. Reason and ideas of equality were not enough; they did not prevent abuse of power, tyranny, or starvation and injustice.
With the possible exception of William Blake, Mary Shelley’s mother (Mary Wollstonecraft) was the most influential of the Enlightenment radicals. Although she wrote in a variety of genres, it was a piece on women’s liberation - *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that won her lasting fame.

**The Romantic Period**

Gothicism is part of the Romantic Movement that started in the late eighteenth century and lasted to roughly three decades into the nineteenth century. The Romantic Movement is characterized by innovation (instead of traditionalism), spontaneity (according to Wordsworth good poetry is a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”), freedom of thought and expression (especially the thoughts and feelings of the poet himself), an idealization of nature (Romantic poets were also referred to as “nature poets”) and the belief of living in an age of “new beginnings and high possibilities.”

**Romanticism/Dark Romanticism:**

Why does the Romantic era offer, amidst its soaring affirmations of the human imagination and the passions, powerful explorations of the dark side of human nature? Why, right alongside (or maybe just beneath the surface of) the dreams of “natural piety,” the dignity of the individual, and the redemptive power of art do we find the nightmare world of the gothic, the grotesque, and the psychotic? Critics and literary historians have come up with three main ideas:

- **the sleep of reason produces monsters:** the Romantic rebellion against Right Reason undermines the moral, primarily didactic role of art, opening it up to all kinds of previously forbidden or irrational and maybe even immoral subjects; an aesthetics based on the imagination can just as well lead us down a “dark chasm” as deliver us to a new paradise.

- **“reason” is in-itself a kind of sleep (Blake calls it “Newton’s stony sleep”);** over-reliance on rationalism will invariably breed fascination with the terms it banishes; we remember that the first gothic novels came during the zenith of the Enlightenment; this is essentially a Freudian model: the return of repressed content to haunt the official aesthetic doctrine—the eruption of the id upon a too restrictive super-ego.

- **“sinners in the hands of an angry God”:** this theory stresses the return of traditional understandings of guilt and divine retribution upon the freethinkers of this revolutionary age; this is a rich source of terror, from Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” to Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

**History around the Turn of the Nineteenth Century**

The Romantic Period is the historical period in which *Frankenstein* was written. It stretches from c.1785 to c.1830, a time of considerable political and social upheaval. It was a time which saw England change from a largely agricultural society to a modern industrial nation, and with this change came a shift in the balance of economic power - the aristocracy’s influence waned as that of the wealthy, industry-owning middle classes grew.

It was also a time of revolution and war. First the American Revolution and later the French Revolution brought ideas of popular freedom, of the power of the proletariat and of the right to equality. In England these ideas were at first enthusiastically received by a large number of Liberal and Radical thinkers, and William Godwin foretold, in his 1793 *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* an inevitable but peaceful evolution towards a society in which property would be equally distributed and government redundant. However, the later terrifying and violent stage of the French Revolution dampened approval for this type of Republicanism.
In England the time of revolution was one of fear, for the ruling classes particularly, and as a result they passed a number of strict laws in an attempt to secure their hold and the nation’s stability. Public meetings were banned, habeas corpus was suspended and those advocating even moderate political change were charged with high treason in time of war. Towards the end of this period, when demobilized soldiers returned home after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, there was a great deal of unemployment, and what work was available was extremely poorly paid. Workers, as yet un-enfranchised and legally forbidden from forming unions, turned to petitions, protest meetings and then riots to express their discontent. Some former manufacturing workers, now unemployed due to increasing mechanization, attempted to destroy the machines which had replaced them. The government responded with the passing, in 1812, of a bill prescribing the death penalty for such sabotage.

Events and tensions escalated somewhat towards the end of the Romantic Period: in 1819 troops charged a large but orderly assembly of workers at St. Peter’s Fields in Manchester, killing nine and injuring hundreds more, in an atrocity which became known as the Peterloo Massacre. Agitation continued, leading to such an atmosphere of revolutionary threat and social instability that in 1830, feeling that England was the closest it had ever come to revolution, Parliament was postponed, and the age of the Whig Reforms was ushered in.
The Gothic: The term ‘gothic’ is used freely in our time, despite most people’s having little comprehension of what it means with regard to literature. The simplest definition is a style of fiction characterized by the use of desolate or remote settings and macabre, mysterious or violent incidents. This, however, deals only with the outward appearance of the genre. At a deeper level, the Gothic can be characterized by exploration of social values, prescriptions and proscriptions, concern with good and evil, and questions regarding the boundaries between what is human, monstrous, natural, unnatural, supernatural and divine.

The Gothic uses monsters and the unknown to make readers consider and examine what knowledge is, and what being ‘human’ really means. It is a world which opened up “the dark irrational side of human nature - the savage egoism, the perverse impulses, and the nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the controlled and ordered surface of the conscious mind.” (Introduction to the Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol II, 1993, M H Abrams ed.)

Romanticism: The Romantic movement in European literature and the arts lasted from the late 1700s to the end of the nineteenth century. A reaction against the neo-Classicist movement which stressed intellect and reason, Romanticism consisted mainly of: a belief in the innate goodness of humans in their natural state; individualism; reverence for nature; primitivism; philosophic Idealism; a somewhat paradoxical tendency toward free thought and religious mysticism; revolt against political authority and social convention; an exaltation of physical passion; the cultivation of emotion and sensation for their own sakes; and, a persistent attraction to the supernatural, the morbid, the melancholy, and the cruel.

Paradise Lost: When Mary Shelley composed Frankenstein, she was influenced by several literary classics. She references these works in Frankenstein, among them Ovid’s Metamorphoses and John Milton’s Paradise Lost. The title page to early editions of Frankenstein carries the following brief passage from John Milton’s Paradise Lost (Book 10, lines 743-745):

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me? —

At one point in the novel, the monster says, after reading Paradise Lost, he sympathizes with Satan’s role in the story:

But Paradise Lost excited different and far deeper emotions. [...] Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He 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: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.
The Narrative: There are three different narratives in *Frankenstein*. Shelley, the author, uses something calling a “framing device” and “epistolary” narration. A framing device is used when someone’s story is told through someone who reads it or hears it (an objective person). Epistolary narration is when a story is told through letters.

First, Shelley introduces Walton’s point of view. We get his view of Victor and how he feels about Victor's personality and actions. Secondly, we’re introduced to Victor’s point of view. We get, first hand, to hear about his childhood and studies, etc. Finally, the creature interrupts Victor’s narration and we get its point of view, leading up to its request for a companion.

This is important because we get three different views into the same story. The three perspectives allow us to form our own opinions about the story. 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.

Other Influences: One particularly interesting influence is the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, who once had a relationship with Mary’s mother, that lasted four years. Fuseli’s painting *The Nightmare* inspired the description of Elizabeth’s dead body flung across her bridal bed just after her murder by the creature in chapter 23:

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She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the
bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features
half covered by her hair. Everywhere I turn I see the same
figure—her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the
murderer on its bridal bier.
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Prometheus: In the early nineteenth century, the Promethean figure became a central theme/ideal in English literature. Poets, like Lord George Gordon Byron, began writing in the revolutionary spirit of the times and using Prometheus as a symbol of protest against religion, morality, limitations to human endeavors, prejudice, and the abuse of power. “Prometheus” is one such literary work, published July 1816. Byron is using the character Prometheus to create a poem that becomes a model for rebellion.

In Greek mythology, Prometheus was one of the Titans, known as the friend and benefactor of humanity, the son of the Titan Lapetus by the sea nymph Clymene or the Titaness Themis. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus were given the task of creating humanity and providing humans and all the animals on earth with the endowments they would need to survive. Epimetheus (whose name means afterthought) accordingly proceeded to bestow on the various animals gifts of courage, strength, swiftness, and feathers, fur, and other protective coverings. When it came time to create a being who was to be superior to all other living creatures, Epimetheus found he had been so reckless with his resources that he had nothing left to bestow. He was forced to ask his brother’s help, and Prometheus (whose name means forethought) took over the task of creation. To make humans superior to the animals, he fashioned them in nobler form and enabled them to walk upright. He then went up to heaven and lit a torch with fire from the sun. The gift of fire that Prometheus bestowed upon humanity was more valuable than any of the gifts the animals had received.
Because of his actions Prometheus incurred the wrath of the god Zeus. Not only did he steal the fire he gave to humans, but he also tricked the gods so that they should get the worst parts of any animal sacrificed to them, and human beings the best. In one pile, Prometheus arranged the edible parts of an ox in a hide and disguised them with a covering of entrails. In the other, he placed the bones, which he covered with fat. Zeus, asked to choose between the two, took the fat and was very angry when he discovered that it covered a pile of bones. Thereafter, only fat and bones were sacrificed to the gods; the good meat was kept for mortals. For Prometheus’s transgressions, Zeus had him chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where he was constantly preyed upon by an eagle. Finally he was freed by the hero Hercules, who slew the eagle.
The Characters of Frankenstein

Robert Walton: The reader’s representative in the novel, he is the person to whom Victor relates his story. He has much in common with Victor: ambition, drive, and the desire for glory.

Victor Frankenstein: He is the main character, a man driven by ambition. His quest for absolute knowledge and power will eventually end in his own ruin.

The Creature: The work of Frankenstein’s hands. He is his double, his persecutor, and his victim. The lives of him and his creator are inextricably entwined.

Elizabeth Lavenza: Both Victor’s sister and his bride. Elizabeth is presented as being angelically good and incomparably beautiful. She represents ideal womanhood and its promises of love and comfort.

Caroline Beufort: Victor’s mother; a paradigm of motherly concern and generosity. Her death provides the catalyst for Victor’s desire to transcend death. It is her last wish that Victor and Elizabeth be married.

Alphonse Frankenstein: Victor’s father; yet another shining example of kindness and selflessness. His happiness depends on the happiness of his children. If they fail, he does as well; thus, their deaths precipitate his own.

William: The youngest son of the Frankenstein family. His death at the hands of the monster renders him a symbol of lost and violated innocence.

Henry Clerval: Victor’s best friend since childhood. Fascinated with the history of mankind, he is Victor’s intellectual opposite. He, too, will be murdered by the monster; he is perhaps a symbol of the destruction of Victor’s own goodness and potential.

Justine Moritz: Though a servant in the Frankenstein household, she is more like a sister to Victor and Elizabeth. She is executed for William’s murder, and thus becomes yet another martyr to lost virtue and innocence.

De Lacey: The head of the household observed by the creature, de Lacey has been robbed of his fortunes as a result of his own kindness. His blindness makes him capable of recognizing the creature’s sincerity and goodness despite his hideous appearance.

Felix: The son of de Lacey, he is devoted to his family and his mistress, Safie. Though noble, he drives the creature from the family cottage with stones. He thereby symbolizes one of the basic flaws in the human character: the hatred of difference.

Agatha: The daughter of De Lacey, she is yet another example of selfless womanhood, caring for her brother and her father despite their poverty and her own sadness.

Safie: The daughter of the Turk, a wealthy businessman. She falls in love with Felix. She is presented as exotically beautiful. The de Lacey family wishes to marry her to Felix and convert her to Christianity.
Analysis of Major Characters

Victor Frankenstein: Victor Frankenstein’s life story is at the heart of *Frankenstein*. A young Swiss boy, he grows up in Geneva reading the works of the ancient and outdated alchemists, a background that serves him ill when he attends university at Ingolstadt. There he learns about modern science and, within a few years, masters all that his professors have to teach him. He becomes fascinated with the “secret of life,” discovers it, and brings a hideous monster to life. The monster proceeds to kill Victor’s youngest brother, best friend, and wife; he also indirectly causes the deaths of two other innocents, including Victor’s father. Though torn by remorse, shame, and guilt, Victor refuses to admit to anyone the horror of what he has created, even as he sees the ramifications of his creative act spiraling out of control.

Victor changes over the course of the novel from an innocent youth fascinated by the prospects of science into a disillusioned, guilt-ridden man determined to destroy the fruits of his arrogant scientific endeavor. Whether as a result of his desire to attain the godlike power of creating new life or his avoidance of the public arenas in which science is usually conducted, Victor is doomed by a lack of humanness. He cuts himself off from the world and eventually commits himself entirely to an animalistic obsession with revenging himself upon the monster.

At the end of the novel, having chased his creation ever northward, Victor relates his story to Robert Walton and then dies. With its multiple narrators and, hence, multiple perspectives, the novel leaves the reader with contrasting interpretations of Victor: classic mad scientist, transgressing all boundaries without concern, or brave adventurer into unknown scientific lands, not to be held responsible for the consequences of his explorations.

The Monster: The monster is Victor Frankenstein’s creation, assembled from old body parts and strange chemicals, animated by a mysterious spark. He enters life eight feet tall and enormously strong but with the mind of a newborn. Abandoned by his creator and confused, he tries to integrate himself into society, only to be shunned universally. Looking in the mirror, he realizes his physical grotesqueness, an aspect of his persona that blinds society to his initially gentle, kind nature. Seeking revenge on his creator, he kills Victor’s younger brother. After Victor destroys his work on the female monster meant to ease the monster’s solitude, the monster murders Victor’s best friend and then his new wife.

While Victor feels unmitigated hatred for his creation, the monster shows that he is not a purely evil being. The monster’s eloquent narration of events (as provided by Victor) reveals his remarkable sensitivity and benevolence. 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 vengefulness and compassion, the monster ends up lonely and tormented by remorse. Even the death of his creator-turned-would-be-destroyer offers only bittersweet relief: joy because Victor has caused him so much suffering, sadness because Victor is the only person with whom he has had any sort of relationship.

Robert Walton: Walton’s letters to his sister form a frame around the main narrative, Victor Frankenstein’s tragic story. Walton captains a North Pole–bound ship that gets trapped between sheets of ice. While waiting for the ice to thaw, he and his crew pick up Victor, weak and emaciated from his long chase after the monster. Victor recovers somewhat, tells Walton the story of his life, and then dies. Walton laments the death of a man with whom he felt a strong, meaningful friendship beginning to form.
Walton functions as the conduit through which the reader hears the story of Victor and his monster. However, he also plays a role that parallels Victor’s in many ways. Like Victor, Walton is an explorer, chasing after that “country of eternal light”—unpossessed knowledge. Victor’s influence on him is paradoxical: one moment he exhorts Walton’s almost-mutinous men to stay the path courageously, regardless of danger; the next, he serves as an abject example of the dangers of heedless scientific ambition. In his ultimate decision to terminate his treacherous pursuit, Walton serves as a foil (someone whose traits or actions contrast with, and thereby highlight, those of another character) to Victor, either not obsessive enough to risk almost-certain death or not courageous enough to allow his passion to drive him.

**Elizabeth Lavenza:** Adopted cousin of Victor Frankenstein. Elizabeth was a beautiful orphan being raised by an Italian peasant family when Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein adopted her. She became Victor’s constant companion and he watched over her as if she were his own possession from their meeting when he was five years old. Her beauty and kindness made her adored almost reverently by all who knew her, and it was taken for granted that she and Victor would marry. She is the gentling influence and the comforter for the males of the Frankenstein family when Caroline dies, and her beauty and goodness are constant throughout her life. She and Victor are married, but on their wedding night, the monster strangles Elizabeth to punish Victor for not creating for him a companion creature.
Character Map

Robert Walton
(Lonely Romantic Arctic explorer; listens and records Victor's tale in letters to his sister)

writes to

Mrs. Margaret Saville
(Walton's sister; receives letters detailing Frankenstein's story)

tells story to

Victor Frankenstein
(the novel's protagonist; plays God by creating the 'monster')

best friends

Henry Clerval
(Innocent childhood friend and traveling companion of Victor; a Romantic figure who seeks foreign lands)

spouses

Elizabeth Lavenza
(Adopted by the Frankenstein family; nurturing female character who marries Victor)

William Frankenstein
(Youngest brother of Victor; first to be murdered)

creates

murders

murders

accused of murdering

Monster
(Hideous creation shunned and feared by his creator and humankind; seeks female companionship)

places locket in her pocket

De Lacey Family
(Blind father, son Felix and fiancée Safie, and daughter Agatha; respected Parisian family who risks their wealth to help Safie's father, only to be betrayed by him; the "monster" performs good deeds for them only to be spurned in return)
Themes and Motifs

This classic novel (first published in 1818) contains several themes: the scientist’s responsibility for the consequences of his own actions; the fatal hubris of stepping beyond “natural” human knowledge to create new life (i.e. become a god); the basic need for human acceptance and relationships, without which one cannot become truly human, or develop a moral sense.

Who is the monster here, Dr. Frankenstein or his creation? Why does the creature become a monster? Does Dr. Frankenstein redeem himself?

Prejudice and Injustice: Prejudice, or judging people with little or no evidence, is a recurring theme throughout Frankenstein. The first major incidence of it comes when Victor abandons his creature. Worse, when he wakes to see it reach out to him just hours after its ‘birth’, Victor assumes it means harm. In fact, it is simply the natural action of a ‘child’ reaching out for its ‘parent’.

People who come across the Monster are all deceived by its appearance into thinking it will do them harm, when in reality it has been born with completely pure and good intentions. It is attacked by townspeople, beaten by Felix (who it thought could be a friend) and shot at by a peasant. It is no wonder it turns evil in the face of such prejudice. Shelley makes us question how we treat those who appear monstrous when we may be monsters ourselves.

Victor also suffers prejudice, in parallel with the Monster, when he is washed up in Scotland and treated with immediate suspicion and anger, called a ‘villain’, and accused of a murder he did not commit. Justine suffers prejudice, and pays with her life, when she is accused of murdering a child. That child, William, is himself prejudiced. He insults the Monster with the same words Victor uses against it, when all it wanted was to make friends. Shelley is constantly showing her readers the destructive and isolating nature of prejudice.

Family: Frankenstein, is a work centered around the concept of the family, albeit so often a failed one. Each unit, from the explorer with paternal reverence of Victor Frankenstein to Victor’s own relationship with his creation represents a familial bond.

Knowledge and Discovery: The novel begins with Walton describing his own voyage of discovery, which he hopes will lead him to the North Pole. On meeting Victor, he hears of another tale of discovery, that of the secret of creating life itself.

The Monster is also on a path of self-discovery, and all three characters share a powerful desire to acquire knowledge – a desire that ultimately leads two of them to their deaths, and which very nearly kills Walton.

The Monster quite naturally seeks knowledge about where it came from and how to survive in a hostile world. Through patient endeavor, it learns how to speak and read. But the knowledge it gains only leads it to curse its existence.

It knows that it can never be accepted in the world of man, yet craves human company and the love of the father who abandoned it. Finally, through learning of the ‘sanguinary (bloody) laws of man’, the Monster is taught that it can be acceptable to kill in some circumstances. This knowledge leads to the deaths of many innocent people.
Robert Walton was brought up by his uncle, and is self-taught in the art of sea-faring. This is despite his father’s dying wish that his uncle forbid him from embarking on a life at sea. His determination to succeed, shown by his willingness to work “harder than the common sailors during the day (and devote his) nights to the study of mathematics… medicine... and physical sciences,” leads him to believe he can be the first to discover the sea passage to the North Pole. However, his real motivation is self-glory, fueled by overwhelming ambition. This leads to him failing to assess the dangers of his voyage and knowingly putting the lives of his crew at risk.

Victor Frankenstein also puts others’ lives at risk, as well as his own, through his ambitious pursuit of knowledge. He neglects his loving family and allows his health to suffer greatly in his obsession to discover the secret of creating life out of death.

Mary Shelley seems not to condemn the act of creation but rather Frankenstein’s lack of willingness to accept the responsibility for his deeds. His creation only becomes a monster at the moment his creator deserts it. Thus Frankenstein warns of the careless use of science - the book was written at an early stage of the Industrial Revolution, a period of dramatic scientific and technological advance.

This is still an important issue, even 200 years after the book was written. Taken into consideration what many inventions of the last 50 years brought upon mankind, one must assume that many scientists still do not care much. (E.g. the splitting of the atom was turned into nuclear bombs and the invention of the computer resulted in an eerie de-humanisation of our society). Most scientists seem to be like Victor Frankenstein, who finished his work in the prospect of achieving fame. Only when he realizes the repulsiveness of his creation, Victor comes to his senses. Intended as a warning, Victor tells his story to the polar explorer Walton:

“I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.”

Sexism: For a novel written by the daughter of an important feminist, Frankenstein is strikingly devoid of strong female characters. The novel is littered with passive women who suffer calmly and then expire: Caroline Beaufort is a self-sacrificing mother who dies taking care of her adopted daughter; Justine is executed for murder, despite her innocence; the creation of the female monster is aborted by Victor because he fears being unable to control her actions once she is animated; Elizabeth waits, impatient but helpless, for Victor to return to her, and she is eventually murdered by the monster. One can argue that Shelley renders her female characters so passive and subjects them to such ill treatment in order to call attention to the obsessive and destructive behavior that Victor and the monster exhibit.

Throughout his narrative, Victor portrays women as weak, suffering, subservient beings who live for and depend on the men in their lives. Surely Shelley experienced this in her own life, though she may or may not have agreed with it. Ironically, the monster—the one who Victor calls a barbarian—has a very progressive notion of the opposite sex. He believes that men and women are largely equal. The monster’s desire for a female companion does not convey a desire to rule over a woman or a belief that a woman should be dependent on him, but it simply shows his need for an equal companion with whom to share his sufferings.
Feminist literary theory claims that Frankenstein’s act of creation is not only a sin against God/nature. It is also an act against the “female principle”, which includes natural procreation as one of its central aspects. The Monster, the result of male arrogance, is the enemy and destroyer of the eternal female principle. The Monster is the child of an unnatural act of procreation in which woman has become unnecessary. The male, who is the executive power in a patriarchal system, has deprived woman of her most natural function because he is now able to create children without female participation. The present discussion about genetic engineering and human cloning shows that this is not a far-fetched utopia.

**Isolation:** *Frankenstein* is full of characters who suffer physical or emotional isolation. Shelley deliberately chose settings that would emphasize this, such as the remote vastness of the Arctic Circle, where the story begins and ends. Walton chooses to isolate himself in this frozen wasteland, yet soon regrets the absence of a true companion on his expedition.

Victor also chooses to isolate himself, firstly at the university in Ingolstadt, when he avoids contact with his family to work on the Monster. Later, he neglects Elizabeth (his most loving, unfailing companion) out of fear she will discover his secret. He then chooses the remote Orkney Islands on which to embark on the construction of the second creature, and seems most comfortable when surrounded by the wilderness of vast lakes, towering mountains or wild heathland.

The creature is a victim of isolation. However, unlike Walton and Victor, it does not bring this upon itself. Indeed, it tries early on to make contact with humans and connect with them, but is always abused, leading to self-imposed isolation in the hovel next to the De Lacey’s cottage.

The torment the Monster feels at being excluded from society in general, and loving companionship in particular, is what makes it ask Victor for a mate. When it later witnesses Victor tearing this mate to pieces, it sees a lifetime of isolation ahead and only then commits its most terrible crimes. Shelley’s point here is that isolation, whether self-imposed or not, can only bring about unhappiness, a breakdown in civilization and, ultimately, tragic consequences.
ATTRIBUTE WEB #1

Name: ___________________________ Date: ______________

Acts:
1. ___________________________
2. ___________________________
3. ___________________________
4. ___________________________

Feels:
1. ___________________________
2. ___________________________
3. ___________________________
4. ___________________________

Looks:
1. ___________________________
2. ___________________________
3. ___________________________
4. ___________________________

Says:
1. ___________________________
2. ___________________________
3. ___________________________
4. ___________________________
ATTRIBUTE WEB #2

Name: ___________________________ Date: __________

How he looks: ______________________________________________________________________

His behavior: ________________________________________________________________________

His thoughts: _______________________________________________________________________  

Character: __________________________________________________________________________

His statements: _____________________________________________________________________

His fears: __________________________________________________________________________

Others’ actions toward him: ______________________________________________________________________

GO.5.6
Story Map

Setting:

Characters:

Problem(s):

Solution:

Ending:
FEELINGS

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Describe the character in the beginning.

---

Event #1

The character feels...

---

Event #2

The character feels...

---

Event #3

The character feels...

---

Event #4

The character feels...

---

Event #5

The character feels...

---

Event #6

The character feels...

---

Describe the character at the end.

GO.5.4
CHARACTER MAP # 2

Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Character

Trait #1
- Evidence
- Evidence
- Evidence

Trait #2
- Evidence
- Evidence
- Evidence

Trait #3
- Evidence
- Evidence
- Evidence

GO.5.2
August 2, 2008

200000 Dreams Come True in L.A. Lane
Los Angeles CA 200000

Dear murderers of love, destiny, and creativity, or, what you so self-importantly call "Hollywood":

I cannot begin to describe how much I ache when I am faced with what you have done to my most blessed creation. I am speaking of a man that took upon himself the rejection of the world and made a valiant effort to find love.

This man taught himself to feel love, remorse, pain, and joy, despite the callous rejection of his creator and the world. He is the example many people turn to who have been victims of rejection and hostility. "Frankenstein," as he has so incorrectly become known, was my one true child that I created from a yearning for love and stability. How dare you turn him into a green, stitched up, brain dead excuse to make money at the box office.

You may think that because I was raised an English Lady that I would not dare speak my mind to such filthy creatures as yourselves. My monster was supposed to serve as an example of a being that can learn to nurture and be nurtured in return. It sounds like you, great men of thinking, have not been nurtured, nor do you know how in return, or you would have at least attempted to portray my creation as a beautiful human being.

I'm going to recommend you see a man who investigated my life quite extensively and was able to pin point a few of my faults; his name is Sigmund Freud and he is willing to work with anyone who has deeply unsatisfying lives, you people are great candidates.

If I were alive today, I would see to it a film were made to expose your own ignorance and complete inability to understand even the most blatant human truths, but alas that movie has already been made. I believe it features two middle aged dimwits, one stupid and the other impossibly more stupid, who decide to save the day by traveling to Aspen to return a suitcase to a beautiful girl, who couldn't care less. On the way, they get robbed by an aged woman, sell a blind child a dead bird and drive for a day in the wrong direction. Surely, you can see the injustice of turning your own complex lives into ridiculous caricatures.

Yes, I know who could ever screw something up so horrifically? Well, you managed it splendidly. You turned my beautiful, complex creature; my brilliant glimpse into the world of emotion and healing, into an eight foot tall green thing with bolts coming out the side of his neck. I hope the money was well worth it.

Forever thank you for ruining my life's work and brilliant creation. You will always remain in my heart as murderers of love, destiny, and creativity.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolstonecraft Godwin Shelley
Creative Genius
Ludwig F. E. Stein

Objective
Seeking positive work environment that will utilize unique skill set.

Experience
2001-2008
GFS (German Finishing School), Neuschwanstein Bavaria
Professor of Parquetry
- Directed students in restoring the famous "Magic Table" at Castle Neuschwanstein.
- Doubled placement at the World's Top Ten Prep Schools for the Twenty First Century.
- Training Manual for unruly teenagers was published by Demons to Angels Quarterly.

1985–2001
ACT (Arctic Circle Tours)
Arctic Circle

Expedition Guide
- Decreased mortality rate by 30%.
- Managed 112 Purebred Siberian husky sled dogs.
- Implemented a training course for new recruits — speeding profitabiity.

1980–1985
Skies The Limit
Machu Picchu, Peru

Professional Rock Climber
- Taught English and German to the International Alpaca Farmers Club of Peru.
- Sponsored an Earth Day celebration in honor of the indigenous peoples of Peru.
- Gave pro bono rock climbing lessons to the local Organic Growers Club of Machu Picchu.

1977–1980
Brains & Braun
Swiss Alps

Motivational Speaker for Executive Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Expanded Outreach program for SCC (Secretly Cool CEOs).
- Won company’s Personality Contest four years running.
- Developed Excellence in Speaking training course.

Education
1972–1977
University of Istanbul, Satellite Campus Transylvania, Romania
- B.A., Psychology & Outdoor Recreation.
- Graduated summa cum laude.

Interests
Board of Directors for the International Alliance of Peace, running, gardening, button collecting, skiing, rock climbing, garlic growing, reading lessons, grave robbing, snow shoeing & landscape design.
References

Count Vlad Dracula
111 Bran Castle
Wallachia
Transylvania,
Romania
Phone: 555-555-5663

Gomez Adams
001 North Cemetary
Drive
Greenbriar
Phone: Cemetery 13

The Hulk
1111 Green Lane
Purpletown
Phone: 555-5123
Cause and Effect:
Events and Consequences

Event #1

Happened because:

Consequence:

Event #2

Happened because:

Consequence:
Hierarchy Chart

Decision that Needs to Be Made

Choice 1

Possible Result
Possible Result
Possible Result

Choice 2

Possible Result
Possible Result
Possible Result

Choice 3

Possible Result
Possible Result
Possible Result
Cause and Effect:
Events and Consequences

Event #1

Happened because:

Consequence:

Event #2

Happened because:

Consequence:
Cause and Effect

Effect:

Cause:

Effect:

Effect:

Effect:

Effect:
Cause and Effect

Cause 1
Cause 3
Cause 5

Cause 2
Cause 4
Cause 6

Effect(s):

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
References


